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PRACTICAL ESSAYS

ON THE

MORNING AND EVENING SERVICES,

AND ON

THE COLLECTS,

IN THE

Liturgy of the Church of England.

BY

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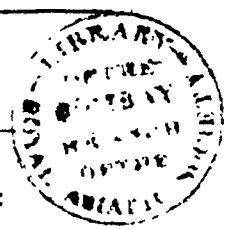
THIRD EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS.——2 Tim. i. 13.

VOL. III.



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ERRATA.

Page 88, line 36, *for* as tares among wheat, *read* as wheat among tares
162, — 37, — or, *read* for
174, — 16, dele (at the beginning of the line.
346, — 18, *for* were, *read* where.

PRACTICAL ESSAYS

ON

The Collects

IN THE

LITURGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, who hast prepared for them that love thee such good things as pass man's understanding; pour into our hearts such love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIS collect is founded on the declaration of St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 9,) "Eye hath not seen, "nor ear heard, neither have entered into the "heart of man, the things which God hath pre-"pared for them that love him;" which Apostolic declaration refers to a prophetic one, (Isa. lxiv. 4,) "Since the beginning of the world men have not "heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath "the eye seen, O God, what he hath prepared "for him that waiteth for him." The Apostle quotes the words of the Prophet, according to a frequent mode of quotation adopted in the New Testament, not with verbal exactness, but a

paraphrastical explanation*. In the context of the Prophet the ancient church is praying for redemption, and encourages herself in the hope of it by a recollection of the wonders which God performed, when he brought his people out of Egypt, and manifested himself on mount Sinai. She then contemplates what he had promised to do, when he became "God manifest in the flesh." In the days of the Messiah greater things might be expected than in the days of Moses, seeing that the Messiah, the Lord of the new dispensation, would be a personage far more illustrious than Moses, and that the thing typified might be expected to exceed the type in glory.

As we shall be led to illustrate more fully the prophetic and apostolic declaration while we are discussing the collect which is founded thereon, we proceed to observe that the collect consists of —an introduction descriptive of the divine goodness to those who love God—and of a prayer founded on that description.

Several particulars in the introduction of our collect demand our attention.

It may be asked, what are those "good things "which God hath prepared for them that love "him?" And, in order to give a full solution of this important question, it is necessary to observe that the "good things which are prepared for "them that love God," relate partly to the present life, and partly to the future.

In the present life "good things" of inestimable value are "prepared for them who love

* Paulus jam hoc dictum prophetæ recitans, non transcripsit illud grammatice, sed Παραφραστικως, sive allegando interpretatus est; *sensum* ejus sectatus, minus presse inhærens verbis; ut sæpe alias. Ab eodem Spiritu actus, *rebus* non *verbis* intentus.—*Vitringa in locum.*

"God." Such surely are the pardon of sin; justification unto life eternal; adoption into the family of God; joy and peace in believing; conversion and progressive sanctification; deliverance from the love and fear of the world, from the fear of death and of a judgment to come; the communion of saints; fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; the earnest of the spirit, and foretastes of glory. These are good things in the most emphatic sense; and all these are prepared for them that love God, and are actually conferred upon them.

But these blessings, vast and inestimable as they justly appear to be, are only first fruits of a future harvest. These indeed are the grapes of Eshcol, and of the same nature and flavour with the clusters of Canaan; but they are attainable only in a comparatively scanty degree by pilgrims in the wilderness. The tree of life grows in the midst of the paradise of God, from which his people will eternally gather in rich abundance the delicious fruit which it bears. The water of the distant stream is indeed of the same quality with that from which it originates; but when we arrive at the fountain-head, we shall not only taste but drink to satiety.

We cannot undertake to describe that which even in its incipient state "passes man's under-"standing." For it is to be observed that the descriptions of heavenly blessings which are given us in the Scriptures are chiefly, if not altogether, of a negative kind. As when they speak of God, they tell us generally what he is not, and not what he is, because we could not comprehend it. He is immortal, invisible, inscrutable, without body, parts, or passions—in all his perfections

infinite. So also the inheritance of the saints is described as "incorruptible, undefiled, and un-"fading." We are informed from what evils we shall be delivered, and from what imperfections we shall be freed; but it is impossible for words to convey to our minds any adequate conceptions of the positive happiness which is prepared for us in heaven. We shall be completely delivered from sin and the long train of evils which it has introduced: yea more, we shall be placed out of the reach of all temptations and occasions of sin, wherein our glorified state will far exceed that of pristine innocence. In consequence of this, there will be no danger of any new separation from God, or exclusion from his kingdom. Both our souls and bodies will be freed from all their present infirmities, and be improved in their properties and capacities to an inconceivable degree of perfection. But "it doth "not yet appear what we shall be; this however "we know, that, when Christ shall appear, we "shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

This leads us to consider the quality of those "good things which God hath prepared for them "that love him." They are such as "pass man's "understanding." In the Apostle's words, of which our collect gives the general sense, there is a beautiful gradation. The things which God hath prepared for them that love him, greatly surpass any which the eye of men hath gazed on, whether the works of man, or the more stupendous works of God, glorious as the latter confessedly are. Nay, they surpass all that report hath brought to our ears; insomuch that the believing sinner, while he tastes the first fruits, and the glorified saint, while he reaps the full

harvest of joy, are both constrained to apply to the salvation of Christ the saying of Sheba's queen concerning Solomon's glory:—"It was a "true report that I heard in mine own land. "Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came "and mine eyes had seen it: and behold the "half was not told me:" thy goodness, O Lord, "exceedeth the fame that I heard." 1 Kings x. 6, 7. The most lively imagination is unable to paint the blessings of redemption with adequate expression. All that it can do is to chalk out a faint outline, and leave experience to fill up and colour the drawing.

These "good things pass man's understand-"ing." Unenlightened reason, however strong may be its native powers, however improved and enlarged by education and the acquisition of human science, can form no just ideas of those things which are the portion of God's people, even in the present world. "The peace of God "which keeps the hearts and minds of his people, "passeth all understanding." Its sweetness can only be conceived by him that enjoys it; and it can be enjoyed only by a divine communication. The plan of redemption from which that peace springs, could "never have entered into the heart "of man to conceive," if it had not been divinely contrived and revealed. And when it is revealed, reason cannot comprehend it without divine illumination. "But God hath revealed it unto us "by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, "even the deep things of God." And of this description surely are the doctrines of justification by faith, and of reconciliation with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and of sanctification by the Holy Ghost. We may therefore

cease to wonder at the opposition which is made to divine truth and to spiritual experience, even by persons calling themselves Christians, and sometimes by men of literature and professors of theology. The doctrines of grace and of communion with God must necessarily puzzle their reasoning faculties, and prove highly objectionable to the pride of fallen man. The opponents of the Gospel resemble the inhabitant of the torrid zone who denied the existence of snow because he had never seen it, and could not understand how water could be condensed into ice conformably to the description which he had received from colder climates. It is evident that the most illiterate believer knows more of spiritual things than the most learned philosopher, if unenlightened by divine teaching: "Unto you," says our Lord to his disciples, "it is given to know "the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to "others it is not given." And again, the same blessed teacher says, "If any man will do the "will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, "whether it be of God, or whether I speak of "myself." Experimental philosophy is justly preferred to the mere theory of physics. And surely, if experience be the best instructor in the science of nature, it must also be the best in a science which is above nature, whose data cannot be furnished by reason, but must be derived from revelation. The constitution of vital Christianity is not to be learned in the common way of instruction, by study and application. The rules of human science cannot be applied to it. It requires "senses exercised to discern it." (Heb. v. 14.) It is impossible to distinguish, to taste, and relish, the spiritual nourishment which is

provided for the soul in the Gospel of Christ without organs of spiritual sensation* adapted to the purpose. Now faith in its different offices corresponds with the several organs of bodily sensation. The Christian, by faith, *sees* him that is invisible, and "beholds, as in a glass, the glory "of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ." He *hears*, by faith, the voice of the good shepherd, which "the natural man" hears not. He "*tastes* that the Lord is gracious." He *smells* "the savour of his good ointments." He *touches* the hem of the Redeemer's garment, and derives virtue therefrom.

But the things which are prepared for them that love God "pass the understanding" of man, even in the highest state of grace—not only of "babes," who, though possessed of spiritualized senses, are "unskilful in the word of righteous-"ness,"—but also of "them that are of full age, "who by reason of use have their senses exercised "to discern both good and evil." We must enjoy them in order to understand them; and as we enjoy but in part, so we know but in part. Even the beloved disciple who lay on his Master's bosom says, "We know not what we shall "be." There is a "height and depth, a length "and breadth in the love of Christ which "passeth knowledge." And it is probable that the glory which is hereafter to be revealed, will be gradually disclosed to "saints made perfect"

* Αισθητηρια are the organs of bodily sensation, the eye, the ear, the smell, the taste, the touch. But neither this word, nor the verb αισθανομαι, nor its derivative Αισθησις, *sense*, is used in the New Testament with relation to the external senses. Αισθητηρια are (by a metaphor) the faculties of perception in the soul, analogous to the corporeal organs.

according as they are capable of bearing and of receiving it. Doubtless every redeemed soul will be filled with beatitude in proportion to its capacity, so soon as it is admitted into the presence of him whose presence is heaven. But no reason can be given why it should not be supposed that the vessels of honour will be eternally enlarging, as God pours into them the riches of his glory. We are taught to believe that the redemption of sinners has augmented the happiness of angels, by presenting to their view a more enlarged discovery of the divine perfections than they had hitherto comprehended. Yet they were always as blessed as their capacity could admit. If therefore the glory of redemption will be progressively unfolded to the inhabitants of heaven, both saints and angels, we may assert that those things which God hath prepared for them that love him, not only pass man's understanding in his present state of mental imbecility, but also the extended power of glorified saints and angels, and will surpass them even after millions of years have been spent in their fruition.

It may be asked, In what sense are these good things said to be prepared? The inheritance is "a purchased possession." The price has been paid, and the property transferred to one who acts in our name as our representative. The title-deeds are in his hands. Nay, he has taken possession of it in our name. He is gone to prepare a place for us, and waits only till we have passed out of our minority to put the inheritance into our own hands. We "know in whom we have "believed, and are persuaded that he is able to "keep that we have committed to him against "that day."

But for whom are these good things prepared?

Are they prepared for all mankind? No. Are they prepared for all the professing members of the church—for all whose names are enrolled in the parochial register—for all who partake of the ordinances of the church? Alas! No. Neither the Scripture nor the doctrine of our church sanctions so wide a comprehension. They are prepared for all those persons, and for those only, who truly "love God;" for none besides them are qualified to receive and enjoy these good things.

To love God is to conceive of him as the one desirable object. It is to make the attainment of his image, favour, and presence, our grand aim; and it is to cleave unto him with all the ardour of our souls. And this we can only do in proportion as we believe that he has first loved us, and is reconciled to us. Faith and love, therefore, are inseparable in every stage of the divine life. They begin to exist and they grow together, till faith is lost in sight, hope swallowed up in fruition, and till love is perfected by union with its glorious object.

Perhaps, a humble saint will say, I fear that I do not love God; for if I did the world would not have so much influence over me as by painful experience I find that it has; my heart would not then be so harrassed with "fear which hath torment;" I should find more pleasure in spiritual exercises, in prayer, praise, and meditation, and the thoughts of heaven would be much sweeter to my soul than they are. Let the timid believer consider the manner in which the prophet speaks in the passage quoted by St. Paul. For therein these good things are said to be prepared for them that "wait for God." To wait for him is to desire and long for the enjoyment of his

favour, image, and presence. And this surely is a proof of love; for no one desires and waits for that which he does not esteem and love in sincerity and truth.

It may be asked whether our love to God be the meritorious cause of that preparation which God hath made for our happiness? Oh, no! for this preparation was made before we had a being, and was continued while we were "enemies to "God by wicked works." "Eternal life," with all its necessary antecedents, "is the gift of God "through Jesus Christ our Lord." But love to God is the evidence of an interest in the heavenly inheritance, and an indispensable qualification for its enjoyment. It is itself one of the "good "things prepared" for us, and is an earnest and foretaste of further blessings.

On the prayer which is founded on this declaration of divine goodness, that "God hath pre-"pared for them that love him such good things "as pass man's understanding," we need not to be diffuse, as it is so nearly allied to the preceding preface. Therein we implore an increase of that love to God which our church supposes all her members to feel; that "loving him above all "things we may obtain his promises, which exceed "all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ "our Lord."

The love of God in the human heart is of divine origin, for "the carnal mind is enmity "against God." And almighty power is necessary to the eradication of enmity and the infusion of love. "The love of God," therefore, is said to be "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy "Ghost given unto us." He illuminates the mind, and consecrates the heart. He testifies that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only

" begotten Son" to die for sinners; and when this is made known to us by grace, " we love " him because he first loved us."

As the first spark of divine love in the breast of fallen man is kindled by the Spirit of God, its increase must be effected by the same agency. Knowing this, we beseech him to " pour into our " hearts the love of his name." We humbly trust that he who knoweth all things knoweth that we love him. But we are dissatisfied (and well we may be) with the small degree of love which we feel and manifest towards him who hath so wonderfully loved us. And therefore we pray for an increase. We beseech him not to distil in scanty drops, but in copious streams to pour into our hearts love towards himself.

God must be the supreme object of our affection, if we love him at all. This every believer knows, and he desires that God may have no rival in his heart. His language concurs with that of the Psalmist, " Whom have I in heaven " but thee! and there is none upon earth that I " desire in comparison of thee." " As the hart " panteth after the water-brooks, so longeth my " soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for " God, for the living God; when shall I come " and appear before God?" " One thing have I " desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that " I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the " days of my life, to behold the beauty of the " Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Such is the frame of soul which prevails in all the genuine members of the church, as expressed briefly in the petition of our collect. And they agree with those which were felt by the members of the ancient church; for godliness is at all times and in all places the same thing. " The

"desire of our souls," said God's faithful people under the old dispensation, "is to thy name and "to the remembrance of thee." While others are crying, "who will shew us any good?" The pious soul exclaims, "Lord, lift thou up the light "of thy countenance upon me."

O let us inquire seriously if our sensibilities resemble those which we have shewn to be prevalent in the bosoms of God's people, and which are supposed to prevail in all those who adopt the language of our church. If we do not love God in sincerity and truth, it is hypocrisy to implore an increase of love to his name. But, alas! how few there are who can honestly join in this petition as expressing the genuine desires of their hearts! If we have not chosen God for our portion, in what does our religion consist? Will the name of a Christian, and an external relation to the church, be acceptable to God, or comfort our souls on a death-bed? Reader, is God "altogether lovely" in your estimation? and have you the same kind of evidence that you love him with a supreme regard, which the man of the world has that the world is his portion? You could easily determine, by an examination of your heart and conduct, whether you love other things, and why should it be difficult to decide whether you love God? Love is the same kind of affection, and produces the same kind of effects, whatever be its object.

This inquiry is of the highest importance, seeing that we cannot obtain the promises of God unless we love him above all things. For not only does the glory of God require that spiritual happiness be not communicated to a divided and idolatrous heart, but the nature of things establishes a connexion between devotedness to

God and the enjoyment of him. From communion with God the happiness of man as a rational creature must arise; and that communion can only be enjoyed in proportion as the heart is estranged from the world and given up to him. The foretaste of bliss here, and the fulness of it hereafter, consist in the "love of God shed "abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given "unto us." In this all the promises meet as their central point of accomplishment.

These "promises" of God, for the fulfilment of which we pray and wait, "exceed all that we "can desire." They are "exceeding great and "precious." A pardon bought with blood is an inestimable favour, which we could never have dared to desire, if it had not been revealed and promised. "Fellowship with the Father and "with his Son Jesus Christ" is an exalted privilege, of which we could have formed no expectations, if the faithful word of God had not raised them within us. Yet these blessings are already in part bestowed on all the genuine members of Christ's holy catholic church. But what their fulness will be, we cannot yet conceive. Let the believer enlarge his desires to the utmost extent to which the imagination will reach, and he may be assured that the promised blessings of the everlasting covenant will far surpass them. It is impossible that faith should be able to explore the unsearchable riches of Christ. They are too vast for human grasp. Is the reader, through grace, pardoned, justified, and partially sanctified? Does he enjoy a measure of peace with God and of communion with him? These are unspeakable blessings. But let him not rest satisfied with the first fruits; let him look forward to the harvest. Let him "open his mouth

"widely, and God will fill it." His most enlarged hopes, desires, and views, will be exceeded by the glorious reality. The believer's experience may be illustrated by a voyage made down a river, delightful indeed and wide at the point of embarkation, but gradually enlarging itself till it is lost in an ocean that has no shore.

O let us pray that our expectations of mercy may not dishonour, by their meanness and poverty, the fountain from which, and the channel in which, it flows. It proceeds from an infinite source, and rolls along in a channel, the dimensions of which are incalculable. The love of God, and the merit of Christ sanction the utmost expectations which can be formed. Let us pray earnestly for a capacity of receiving more and more out of the inexhaustible riches of divine goodness; remembering that a supreme love to God is the indispensable pre-requisite, and that in proportion as this increases, our happiness will increase with it. Let us not fear lest we should ask too much; for we ask all "THROUGH JESUS "CHRIST OUR LORD. Amen."

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things; graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EVERY one who "knoweth the grace of God "in truth," will be anxious to obtain a further acquaintance with it, conformably to St. Peter's exhortation to "grow in grace and in the know- "ledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." He cannot be satisfied with the measure which he hath attained; but this "one thing" will be predominant in his mind, to "apprehend that "for which also he is apprehended of Christ "Jesus." For he will perceive that there are in Christ "unsearchable riches" which he can never exhaust, and a boundless fulness of grace which he can never explore; and that "the treasures "of wisdom and knowledge" which "are hid in "him" will be progressively opening to the view of the blessed through all eternity. Here he discovers a species of covetousness and ambition, which is laudable and of good report, which cannot be indulged with too much freedom, and which will never disappoint its most eager votaries.

That a growing acquaintance with the power of godliness is the one great object of desire to

an awakened mind, appears from the devout breathings of holy men, whose memoirs are recorded in the word of God, and who have therein expressed the genuine feelings of the converted heart. If either the Old Testament or the New be examined with a view to ascertain the tendency of the affections in every believing soul, it will appear, from the devotional language of the Psalms, and the fervent prayers which are interspersed through the epistolary writings of the Apostles both for themselves and their converts, that the heart of a true Christian is habitually on the stretch for further discoveries of redeeming love, closer intercourse with God, and a fuller conformity to his glorious image. The Christian's mind may indeed be engaged about a thousand less important things, which require some attention from day to day during his abode in the present world; but the predominant solicitude of his breast is, that he "may be filled with all the "fulness of God." The awakened soul, like the caterpillar at the crisis of its transformation, is uneasy and struggles for "the glorious liberty of "the sons of God." He is a candidate for perfection; and till it be obtained, the pursuit of it is his great concern.

The Scripture addresses man as a rational creature. It appeals to his hopes and fears, his present happiness and his future expectations, for the purpose of exciting him to energy and action in his heavenly course. But its exhortations do not suppose him to be self-sufficient, or able of himself and by his own strength to comply with its requisitions. Yet there is no absurdity in its exhortations, inasmuch as there is a throne of grace to which he may apply, and where he may obtain help in the prosecution of

his great work. Thither the conscious mind will repair, convinced of its own imbecility, and meet with no disappointment of its expectations; while the impenitent, careless, and self-sufficient soul will be justly punished for neglecting the great salvation.

Our present collect consists of an introduction, which acknowledges God to be the author and giver of all good things—and of a prayer for grace, branched off into four petitions.

In the introduction of our collect we address the adorable object of our worship as the "Lord, "of all power and might." This address corresponds with the prayer that follows it, wherein we implore blessings which Omnipotence only can bestow. In asking favours which are out of the reach of finite ability, the mind cannot exercise faith in God without reflecting on his almighty power. That nothing is impossible with God is the comfort of a sinner who feels corruption to be interwoven with every fibre of his frame, and who has proved the inefficiency of his own strength for his salvation. And therefore, while this awful attribute of Deity, Omnipotence, is a subject full of terror to the impenitent sinner who can claim no interest in the divine favour, it is, in conjunction with the other perfections of the Godhead, the only and all-sufficient source of consolation to a believer, who, being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, can avouch Jehovah to be his God. Let the Christian reader meditate much and often on the omnipotence of God, who is "able "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we "ask or think." Let him remember that how many soever be the impediments that obstruct his salvation, despair is altogether unreasonable, since God is engaged for him.

It is the privilege of the Christian believer to contemplate the revelation which Jehovah hath made of himself—to say with the Psalmist, "God "hath spoken once, twice have I heard this," (or, these two things have I heard) "that power "belongeth unto God; also unto thee, O Lord, "belongeth mercy." This revelation made by God himself of his power and mercy, is an impregnable barrier against the assaults of despondency, an insurmountable dam opposed to the raging floods of temptation. "Power and "mercy belong to God," both being of infinite extent, and acting in perfect unison for the benefit of all who fly to God as their refuge. In the belief of this truth the guilty conscience, the burthened heart, and the tempted soul, may find relief. Does the reader find himself like a shipwrecked mariner, who has been tossed so long on the waves, and is so bruised by their violence, that he is unable to reach the rock which mercy has provided for his rescue? Does he find that, when he approaches it, and endeavours to lay hold of it, and to climb its steep ascent, his weakness is so great that he is washed off again by the next returning wave of temptation? Let him remember that God is "Lord of all power "and might," and that his hand reached out can effect what human weakness can never accomplish. Does another of Zion's mourners complain of "sin that dwelleth in him" as being yet vigorous and unsubdued? Is he ready to fear that its destruction is impossible? Let him remember that "power belongeth unto God." Does the hideous roar terrify him? Let him mark the strength of that chain, and the power of that arm, by which the monster is confined. Doth he feel that he is ready to faint by the way, and fear lest he should

never reach to his journey's end? Let him look to "the Lord of all power and might," who will "endue him with strength in his soul" sufficient for his necessities, according to the faithful promises of Scripture.

We proceed to ascribe to God the production and donation "of all good things." As creatures and as "new creatures in Christ Jesus," we owe whatever good we now possess, and shall owe whatever good we receive hereafter, to his almighty and all gracious hand. "He made us, "and not we ourselves;" he gave us the powers and faculties which we possess, and he continues to bestow on us all the comforts of life which we enjoy. But our collect speaks more particularly of the blessings of redemption, as appears by the petitions which the preface introduces. And here "all things are" indeed "of God, who hath "reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." God is "the author of all good things," for his own arm wrought salvation for us. We had neither the will nor power to accomplish the vast undertaking or any part of it, and no creature could afford us any help in the work. Atonement for sin, and obedience to the law, were things equally out of our power to perform. Abandoned to ourselves we must have lain down in despair, and have made our bed in hell. "But God who "is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith "he loved us," became "the author of all good "things" for the benefit of a lost world. Whatever is good, calculated to promote his own glory or our happiness, he hath provided in the Gospel—of which he drew the stupendous plan, and executed the dread conditions by his own power and might, independent of aid from any creature.

As God is "the author," so also he is "the "giver of all good things." In conversion and sanctification, as well as in redemption, he is "ALL IN ALL." He quickens the dead, enlightens the blind, strengthens the weak, heals the sick, and saves to the uttermost. "Our help "standeth in the name of the Lord who made "heaven and earth." He "wrought all our "works for us, and he worketh all our works in "us." To him we owe all the glory of the past; and in him must we place our confidence for the future. We are his workmanship, created in "Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had "before ordained that we should walk in them;" and "by the power of God we must be kept "through faith unto salvation, ready to be re-"vealed in the last times."

The subject of the introduction to our present collect having been brought before us in part on a former occasion*, we shall not now enlarge further thereon. But we proceed to consider the prayer which is founded on it, and which is branched out into four particulars. We pray that God would "graft in our hearts the love of his "name," that he would "increase in us true "religion," that he would "nourish us with all "goodness, and of his great mercy keep us in "the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

We beseech the "Lord of all power and might "to graft in our hearts the love of his name."

The name of God is God himself. "Among "the creatures, they and their names are two "different things; but, respecting the blessed "God, IPSE EST NOMEN EJUS, ET NOMEN "EJUS EST IPSE; himself is his name, and his

* See the collect for the Fifth Sunday after Easter.

"name is himself*." "We are accustomed, "through the poverty of human language and "conception, to distinguish between God and his "attributes; and, in tenderness to our under-"standings, this distinction is permitted in the "sacred writings by God himself. But God and "his attributes are one. We speak of the wis-"dom, holiness, justice, love, and power of God; "but God is not a being *endued* with these per-"fections only: he *is* the perfections themselves. "Man and his knowledge are two things; but "God and whatever is predicable of his divine "nature is entirely one. That we do not con-"ceive thus of him, and form to ourselves more "exact notions of the simplicity of the Godhead "from the things which occur to our senses, is, "because (as Maimonides justly expressed it) "the defect of our intellect, in apprehending "him, is like the weakness of our sight in be-"holding the sun: that great luminary yields "too strong light for our visual faculty; yet the "fault is not in it, but in us†."

When therefore we pray that the love of God's name may be grafted in our hearts, we beseech him to shed abroad in them the love of his character as it is revealed in the Scriptures, to enable us to reverence and esteem with supreme regard his wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, power, and truth. And with this love of his intrinsic perfections will be united a love of every thing which relates to him—of his word, his day, his people, his ordinances, and his worship.

The phraseology of this first petition is adopted from the practice of horticulture. To graft is to

* R. Barachiel. See also Jer. xvi. 21; Micah vi. 9.

† Horæ Solitariæ, vol. i. p. 248.

insert a cion or branch of one tree into the stock of another. Now the heart of man is justly compared to a wild and worthless tree. It bears no fruits of righteousness. It can, in its natural state, bear none. The fruits which it yields are noxious, hateful productions. Instead of the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, long suffering, "gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, tem- "perance," which it was created to produce; it is so degenerate from its pristine state, that it naturally bears nothing but "works of the flesh, "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lascivious- "ness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, "emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, "envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, "and such like." It is evident that it cannot change its own nature, and that its nature must be changed before it can bring forth fruit unto God, or be pleasing in his sight. The "Lord of "all power and might" alone can make it new; for he is "the author and giver of all good "things." To him, therefore, we apply by earnest prayer, beseeching him that our "carnal "mind which is enmity against him" may be destroyed, and that "the spirit of power, of love, "and of a sound mind," may be implanted in its stead.

From this petition of our collect, as well as from the whole tenour of Scripture and of our church-service, it appears that divine love is not connatural to our fallen hearts. The name of God, that is, his perfections, are objects of aversion to us in our unconverted state. His inviolable justice, his immaculate holiness, his almighty power, and even his infinite mercy, confined as it is to one channel of communication, are all hateful to the fallen mind of man; because they are

all hostile to his corrupt propensions, to his love of sin, his hope of impunity in the indulgence of it, his impenitence and pride. The consideration of them creates disgust, terror, and dismay, because they are destructive to the carnal peace and false security of the unregenerate soul.

Now that which we implore is, that our hearts may be impregnated with an adscititious branch; that "the love of God may be shed abroad there-"in by the Holy Ghost given unto us." But how is so great a change as the conversion of enmity into love to be produced? The "Lord of all "power and might" can alone effect it. And it is effected instrumentally by an exhibition of redeeming love. When God the Holy Ghost, by the sharp pruning-knife of conviction, has cut off the natural shoots, divided the stock, and thereby made room for the new cion, he inserts it and it grows. Or (to drop the metaphor) when he has awakened the conscience of a sinner to a sense of his guilty, polluted, and helpless state, and of his danger as exposed to the wrath of God and fit only for the everlasting burnings—when he has separated the soul from its former self-righteous hopes and dependences—then he exhibits the love of Christ to its view, enables it by faith to rely on Christ for pardon and salvation, and thus destroys its love of sin and hatred of God. And now the attributes of God, which before appeared like an hostile army drawn up in battle-array, with menaces in every look, and destruction in every motion, are disarmed of their terrors. Nay, more, their united aspect is full of sweetness and kindness; every divine perfection, as it were, smiles on the believing penitent, and conduces to secure his heart for God who is now become his portion and his friend.

"Though thou wast angry with me, yet thine "anger is turned away, and thou comfortest "me."

We proceed to pray for an increase of true religion in our souls. This petition differs but little from the former, except that in the latter we ask for an increase of that divine principle, the implantation of which was the subject of the former request. For "true religion" is, essentially, love to God; and all its branches and fruit spring from this heavenly cion.

Religion is a sense of those obligations which we owe to God, and a performance of those duties which spring from these obligations. We are bound to "believe in him," as our Creator and Redeemer, to "fear him, and to love him with "all our heart, mind, soul, and strength; to "worship him, to give him thanks, to put our "whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour "his holy name and his word, and to serve him "truly all the days of our life." Religion is a consecration of our hearts and lives to God.

It appears from our collect that there are spurious and false religions; for otherwise the epithet "true" needed not to have been added in order to distinguish that religion for the increase of which we pray. Such is that of the formalist and pharisee in all its shapes and gradations. For "true religion" is love to God, originating in a persuasion of his love to us as manifested in the gift of his Son to die for us; which persuasion necessarily supposes a previous conviction of our lost estate, and our need of that divine interposition in our favour. From this self-annihilating principle both the unmeaning homage of the formalist, and the self-righteous plea of the pharisee, are utterly abhorrent. True religion

begins in self-condemnation and renunciation, is carried on by faith which worketh by love, and breathes its last resolution in the language of St. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." They are "the true circumcision, who worship God in "the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have "no confidence in the flesh."

The propriety and necessity of this petition for an increase of true religion in our hearts will be evident to every conscious mind. For O how defective are the best members of the church on earth in those sensibilities in which true religion consists, and in those effects which it is calculated to produce! Where is that depth of humility, that liveliness of gratitude, that strength of affiance, that fire of zeal, which become us as the servants of God and believers in Jesus? And in every "work of faith and labour "of love" how short we come of our duty and of God's glory! The genuine penitent will blush at the survey, and cry from the bottom of his soul, "Lord of all power and might, increase in me "true religion!"

In the third branch of our prayer, we beseech God to "nourish us with all goodness." The foreign cion of love to God which is inserted in our hearts must be nourished by his grace, or it will languish and die. He must water as well as plant, or no fruit can be produced. All those amiable qualities which constitute the divine image, and which sanctifying grace restores to the fallen soul, are of and from God. It is from Christ "the head" that "all the body, by joints "and bands having nourishment ministered and "knit together, increaseth with the increase of "God." Even the means of grace, without the

spirit of grace, are unavailing to the furtherance of the divine life. An appeal to experience in this case will supply the place of a thousand arguments. The sacred cion must have moisture and warmth extrinsically communicated, or it cannot incorporate itself with the stock in which it is inserted so as to become fruitful in good works.

Lastly, we beseech God "of his great mercy" to "keep us in the same." What an humiliating view of human depravity and helplessness does our collect present? Man, in whose "flesh "dwelleth no good thing," is totally unable to regenerate himself, or, being regenerate, to "keep "himself" in the spirit and practice of godliness. How striking and beautiful is the short prayer of the celebrated Fenelon, "Lord, take my heart "to thyself, for I cannot give it to thee; and "when thou hast taken it, keep it for thyself, "for I cannot keep it for thee: Give me such "outward crosses as may keep me under the "obedience of thy cross, and save me in spite "of myself."

But to what doth this last petition of our collect refer? It refers to all the foregoing particulars. Keep us in the love of thy name; under the influence and in the practice of "true re-"ligion;" in the experience of "all goodness." Keep us daily, hourly, momentarily. Keep us to the end of our lives, the termination of our warfare, "through Jesus Christ our Lord;" that at length an abundant entrance may be ministered to us into his everlasting kingdom. The conscious breast will join heartily in the AMEN of the catholic church.

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, whose never failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth; we humbly beseech thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It is a most magnificent idea which the ancient church has given of the object of her worship, when she says, "Our God is in the heavens, he "hath done whatsoever he pleased." Psal. cxv. 3. This is indeed a satisfactory answer to the question which a blaspheming foe, whether human or infernal, may ask us in our troubles, "Where "is now your God?" We have a God—one who is able to help us, and hath pledged himself to be our helper. Nothing hath happened to us contrary to his will or to our real welfare. His infinite wisdom and power are engaged to make all things work together for the good of his people. Such is our God; whereas "all the idols of the "heathen are silver and gold, the works of men's "hands. They have mouths, but they speak "not; eyes have they, but they see not. They "have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, "but they smell not; they have hands, but "they handle not; feet have they, but they "walk not; neither speak they through their "throat. They that make them are like unto "them; so is every one that trusteth in them;" senseless and worthless are both they and their worshippers. Our God sees our distresses, hears

our prayers and answers them, relieves our wants, delivers us from trouble, and will finally save us from all evil. And therefore while others trust in unprofitable idols, we will trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Such hath been the determination of every genuine member of the church of God, whether under the Old or the New Testament-dispensation. Such is the determination which we avow in our present collect; which contains—a preface, ascribing to our God an universal and never failing providence,—and a prayer founded on that ascription.

The preface or introductory part of our collect ascribes to God an universal and never failing providence. It will be our present object to prove the existence and to shew the nature of divine providence, and then to demonstrate that it is universal and never failing.

Providence is foresight, timely care, and the act of making provision. The providence of God is his care and superintendence over creation. The existence of divine providence appears from various passages of Scripture, and from what are called the works of nature. To deny it is atheistical. In the creed of a Christian the doctrine of chance has no place, for he believes that "God "ordereth all things after the counsel of his own "will." According to the book of inspiration, which is the standard of a Christian's creed, if a man be slain by what is usually called an accident, it is God who delivers the person who is slain into the slayer's hand. Exod. xxi. 13. "Affliction "cometh not forth from the dust, neither doth "trouble spring out of the ground." Job v. 6. "Promotion cometh neither from the East, nor "from the West, nor from the South: But God

" is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth " up another." Psal. lxxv. 6, 7. " A man's heart " deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his " steps." " The lot is cast into the lap; but the " whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Prov. xvi. 9. 33. " There are many devices in a man's " heart: nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, " that shall stand." Prov. xix. 21. " The horse " is prepared against the day of battle; but safety " is of the Lord."—From these and a great multitude of other passages, the doctrine of divine providence is fully established, as will further appear while we take a two-fold view of the subject. The providence of God may be considered both as it upholds and governs the things which he has made.

He " upholdeth all things by the word of his " power." Heb. i. 3. As no creature could be the cause of its own existence, so neither of its own continuance. An independent creature is an absurdity. Though God acts by means, yet these means must be traced up to a first cause. The chain of effects, however protracted, must have a first link, and that first link must depend on God.

As the providence of God upholds all things which he has made, so also it governs them. All things animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, great and small, are under his control and direction. The very heathens compared God to the pilot of a ship, a charioteer, the general of an army, and a king; by which comparisons they discovered their belief in his providence. The Epicureans indeed supposed God to sit in majestic ease, unconcerned about any of his creatures. But St. Paul's confutation both of them and of the Stoics will be satisfactory to

all who receive the Scriptures as the word of God. "God that made the world and all things "therein, is Lord of heaven and earth. He "giveth to all life and breath and all things. "In him we live, and move, and have our being. "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will "judge the world in righteousness by that man "whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given "assurance unto all men in that he hath raised "him from the dead." Scripture and true philosophy unite in ascribing to God the government of his own world.

We proceed to consider the universality of God's providence. It "ordereth all things both "in heaven and in earth." The greatest things are not independent of its support and government; nor are the most minute and inconsiderable beneath its notice. The "angels that excel "in strength" are upheld and governed by him who made them. The sun, the moon, and the stars, move in their orbits as they are moved by him, not immediately indeed, but mediately, as they are acted on by second causes which primarily derived their agency from God. The raging tempest and the boiling deep receive law from his mouth. The rise and fall of empires are effects of his power, all the subordinate parts of the great machine, both of the material and moral world, depending on him as its main spring. On the other hand, the sparrow does not fall to the ground without our heavenly Father's observation and permission. The very hairs of our heads are all numbered. By him the young ravens are fed; and the young lions roaring after their prey do seek their meat from God. Sublime and beautiful was the language of adoration adopted by king Nebuchadnezzar after his conversion and

restoration to his throne:—"His dominion is an "everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from "generation to generation. And all the in- "habitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: "and he doth according to his will in the army "of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the "earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto "him, What dost thou?"

The providence of God is either ordinary or extraordinary. Seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, are the effects of his ordinary providence. The support of Elijah during his abode in the wilderness, the preservation of Daniel in the lions' den, and of the three children in the burning fiery furnace, and other such like events, are instances of an extraordinary or miraculous providence.

But let us consider the providence of God as it is occupied about ourselves. We are the children of divine providence in our "creation, "preservation, and all the blessings of this life" which we receive. "Thou art he that took "me out of the womb; thou didst make me "hope (or keptst me in safety*) when I was "upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon "thee from the womb: thou art my God from "my mother's belly." In childhood, youth and riper years, all the events of our lives have been ordered by God's "never-failing providence." This fixed the bounds of our habitation, and our external circumstances. "Our times" of health and sickness, of prosperity and adversity, of life and death, "are in his hand." And, in the more important concerns of our souls, we owe the place of our nativity, the means of grace, our

* Marg. reading.

connexion with the Christian church, and all our other spiritual advantages, to the overruling providence of God.

The universality of divine providence is plainly demonstrable from the petitions which have been offered by inspired persons, and which are recorded in Scripture, for particular blessings, personal and national, and from the acknowledgments made by them to the great ruler of the world, when such petitions have been answered. For if the events of human life were left to accident, such petitions and praises would be enthusiastic, absurd, and impious. But the promises of God relative to our temporal concerns shew that they are not so. And it is not of much importance for us to determine how far the interpositions of divine providence in our favour are common or extraordinary in any particular cases. It is enough for us to know that all is of God, to acknowledge his hand, and to give him the glory. In the act of weighing an anchor, its removal from its station at the bottom of the ocean depends as much on the power of the lever attached to the capstan as the first circuitous motion of the cylinder on the deck, though between it and the anchor ever so great a length of cable intervene.

The providence of God is, moreover, conversant about the actions of rational creatures. Both the good and evil actions of mankind are connected with it. In assigning the former to the influence of God's providence, there is no difficulty. But, respecting the latter, the difficulty is great. For it may be asked, how is the universal providence of God consistent with the free agency and responsibility of rational creatures? How is it reconcileable with the existence of moral evil? This is indeed a profound, mysterious, and awful

subject; these are deep waters, through which no finite understanding can wade. A confession of ignorance is therefore no disparagement to it. An attempt to solve what is insoluble, to discover what is not revealed, is an act of idiotism and presumption. It is, however, certain that divine providence is not excluded from a connexion with those actions which are sinful, though it is equally clear that it is never the cause of sin. To deny the former position is to contradict the Scriptures; and to assert the latter is blasphemy. (Gen. xlv. 8. Comp. l. 20; Exod. vii. 3; 2 Sam. xvi. 10; 2 Chron. x. 15; 1 Kings xxii. 19, 20. 23; Isa. xix. 14; lxiii. 17; Rom. i. 26; 2 Thess. ii. 11; Acts ii. 23; iii. 18; iv. 28*.) God is not

* "Declare how God can have a hand in these things, "and yet be free from sin."—"He is a cunning workman, "which with an ill toole can work cunningly. And as a "most excellent apothecary maketh a medicine of the "mixture of poison in it, which is yet not poisonous, but "rather medicinall; so the Lord in guiding and managing "the poison of sin, draweth treacle from the sins of men, "as it were poison, in such sort as they turn to his glory "and the good of his church: and cannot be charged with "sin no more then the apothecary with poisoning, in so "ordering the poison, as it doth the contrary, by his skill, "unto that which by nature it would doe. And as in paint-"ing, the black colour giveth grace to other beautiful "colours, in making them shew better: so it is in this work "of God, in which the sin and untruth of men (as by a "black and dark colour) causeth the truth and righteousness "of God (as the white) to bee more commended and to "appeare better." "But how are these actions of the "wicked to be discerned from the work of God in them? "*First*, by the cause from whence the action cometh. "For Joseph's brethren of envie sent him into Egypt; but "God in mercy. Shimei cursed David of malice; but "God of justice against David's murther and adultery. "Rehoboam out of the unadvisednesse of his heart refused "the request of his people; but God by his wise counsell "did so dispose of it. The devil from hate to Ahab was

the author of moral evil; for "he cannot be "tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any "man. But every man is tempted, when he "is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth "forth sin; and sin when it is perfected, bringeth "forth death." The doctrine of Scripture is equidistant from fatalism and chance. And as the line of truth on this deep subject seems to be "a path which the vulture's eye hath not "seen," it is our "wisdom to acquiesce," without seeking to be wise above what is written, in the declaration of our church, that "God's "never-failing providence ordereth all things "both in heaven and earth;" devoutly exclaiming with St. Paul, "O the depth of the riches, "both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

"a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets; but God "in justice against his idolatry. Pilate of ambition and "feere, the Jewes of malitious envy and ignorance, Judas "of covetousnesse, but God of love, gave Christ, and "Christ himself in obedience to his Father: and there-"fore that action, as it was from God and Christ, was "most just and righteous, as from the other most wretched "and abominable."

"*Secondly*, by the end whither they tend. For Joseph's "brethren sent him, to the end he should not come to "the honour he foretold out of his dreame: but God sent "him to provide for his church, and to fulfill that which "was foretold. Shimei cursed, to drive David to despair: "but God directed him for exercise of David's patience. "The devil lyed in the false prophets, to ruine Ahab: "but God justly to punish him for his idolatry. Reho-"boam, to satisfy the desire of his young beardlesse coun-"sellors: but God to performe the word that he had "spoken by his prophet. Pilate to please the people and "to keep his credit with Cæsar; Judas for obtaining the "money he desired; and the Jewes that our Saviour "Christ not should reigne over them: but God and Christ "to save his people."——*Archbishop Usher's Body of Divinity*, third edit. p. 112.

" how unsearchable are his judgments, and his " ways past finding out! For who hath known " the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his " counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, " and it shall be recompensed to him again? " For of him, and through him, and to him " are all things; to whom be glory for ever. " Amen."

God's providence is " never failing." It cannot fail of accomplishing its purpose, for it is the result of certain prescience and almighty power. He " doth whatsoever pleaseth him."

Let us endeavour to apply the doctrine maintained in the introduction of our collect to personal advantage and comfort. It is a most consolatory thought, that God's " never-failing " providence ordereth all things both in heaven " and earth," to all those who have obtained redemption through the blood of Christ. Are they poor in their outward circumstances? Let them remember that it was not chance which placed them in their present situation, but that their lot was chosen for them by infinite wisdom, and is undoubtedly the best which infinite love could appoint. Are they rich? And are they ready to say, why did providence place me in a situation in which it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for me to enter into the kingdom of God? Let them remember that, as the bounty of God has given them what they possess, so his grace can enable them to make such a use of it as shall be profitable both to themselves and others. Let them be thankful for the opportunity afforded them of glorifying God and eagerly embrace it, knowing that it is not the possession of wealth, but a delight and confidence in it, which is an obstacle to salvation.

The sick and the healthy, the weary voyager on this stormy ocean who wishes to be at rest, but is detained longer from the desired haven than he expected, and the timid saint, who fears a premature death before the work of grace is accomplished within him, these may all derive comfort from the contemplation of our collect.

Having made these remarks on the doctrine of divine providence, as it is stated in the preface of our collect; we proceed to consider the prayer which is founded on it, that God would "put "away from us all hurtful things, and give us "those things which be profitable for us, through "Jesus Christ our Lord."

Hurt and profit in these petitions relate not so much to our bodies as to our souls—not so much to time as to eternity. For a Christian (and such the church of England worshipper is supposed to be) at all times, and especially when he is on his knees, "looks not at the things "which are seen and are temporal, but at the "things which are not seen and are eternal." Our prayer consists of two parts,—a deprecation of evil—and an imprecation of good.

Those things are hurtful, and those only, which bring guilt on the conscience and pollute the soul, and which thereby hinder it in its progress heavenwards. Sin, with all its temptations and occasions, is the comprehensive evil which we deprecate. Our petition corresponds with the last that occurs in the Lord's prayer.

We are continually liable to things hurtful. For the world abounds with temptations to sin, and opportunities of committing it. Our own hearts are prone to it. And the devil is constantly watching for means of leading us into it. Now who, but God that "ordereth all

"things both in heaven and earth," can "put "away from us" the innumerable "hurtful "things," by which we are encompassed? Let the cases of Achan and Judas, of David and of Peter, (Josh. vii. 21; Matt. xxvi. 14–16; 2 Sam. xi. 2–4. 14–17) be well considered, and it will appear how necessary such a petition as this in our collect is,—how necessary it is for every day and hour. For who is ignorant how hard it is to keep his own heart free from sinful desires, and to encounter objects calculated to excite them? Every situation, every occurrence, every day, hour, and minute, is attended with its peculiar dangers, from which no human foresight nor strength can secure us.

An imprecation of things profitable is no less necessary than a deprecation of things hurtful; for we want both the wisdom and power to promote our own advantage. If left to choose for ourselves, we should choose what would lead to our own destruction. And could we even choose aright, which it is impossible we should, we could not procure the things we had chosen. We therefore beseech God both to choose and provide for us, making all things to work together for the benefit of our precious souls.

In this petition we have respect both to prosperity and adversity, to sickness and health, to life and death; and, in short, to all things relative to our state in this life, and to our preparation for the next. We contemplate ourselves as clay, and God as the Potter; and we beseech him to mould us after his blessed will, that we may become "vessels meet for the Mas-"ter's use." We place ourselves in his hands to be provided for both in soul and body by his "never-failing providence, which ordereth all

"things both in heaven and earth." Our prayer is an act of faith in his wisdom, power, and grace.

Let us inquire whether our views of divine providence be consonant to those of the church to which we belong, and whether our belief in it be of a practical nature. She teaches us to believe that God's "never-failing providence "ordereth all things both in heaven and earth." We profess to adopt her creed; but do we glorify God in all the occurrences we meet with, eyeing his hand in them, as holy, just, and good? Can we

——"Praise him for all that is past,
"And trust him for all that's to come?"

Are we humble and submissive in adversity, and thankful in prosperity; believing that, in the former, God is promoting our salvation; and that in the latter, all is of his unmerited grace?

Are our fervent desires in unison with the prayers of our church? Do we indeed implore from God a preservation from all things hurtful, and the donation of all things profitable for us? Would we have him to deprive us of health and prosperity, to take away our dearest earthly comforts, if he should see that they would prove injurious to us? And, on the other hand, do we sincerely desire that he would send us sickness, poverty, or any other affliction, which he sees to be necessary to promote our spiritual welfare? Let us scrutinize our own petitions, and compare with them the state of our own hearts. Those who can truly join in this collect of our church, understanding the language of their own lips while they use it, may conclude that they are not only members of the church

of England, but genuine members of the church of Christ; and that God's "never-failing pro-"vidence, which ordereth all things both in "heaven and earth, will put away from them "all hurtful things, and give them those things "which be profitable for them, through Jesus "Christ their Lord. Amen."

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Grant to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the Spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OUR present collect is a prayer for sanctifying grace—an important blessing for which we cannot pray too frequently nor too earnestly. For "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Our collect, like the divinely inspired Scriptures on which it is founded, is "profitable for doctrine, "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in "righteousness; that the man of God may be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good "works." It lays down some of the most important doctrines of true religion, and convicts of glaring hypocrisy out of their own mouths, all those who hold errors contrary to those doctrines. It is calculated to correct those whose practice disagrees with the prayers they offer, and whose conduct falsifies the sincerity of their public worship, It is suited to promote the piety of those who are sincere in their approaches to the mercy-seat; and, by teaching them to pray for further degrees of renewing grace, to advance their conformity to the will of God; that the man of God may be complete in every good word and work.

Our collect contains,—a prayer for sanctifying grace—and a declaration of the end for which that grace is implored.

The blessing implored is the Spirit of God, that is, the influence of the Holy Ghost. Our church maintains in all her forms the necessity of divine influence to all spiritual life and action, as every one who has used them must plainly have discerned, unless indeed he has repeated them after the manner of an automaton. Without this energy continually communicated to us, all our thoughts, words, and works, must of necessity be always and altogether wrong. Before conversion, we are dead in trespasses and sins; and a dead man is incapable of action. After it, a continuation of the same agency on the soul by which life was produced, is indispensable to a holy walk; even as the continued ingress of air, which first sets the lungs of a new-born infant in motion, is essential to its vitality, growth, and action, through every successive period of life. For the Spirit of God is that to the soul which breath is to the body. Hence Christians are said to "live in the "Spirit," and to "walk in the Spirit;" "the "Spirit maketh intercession for them," by exciting within them "groanings that cannot be "uttered." They "worship God in the Spirit;" and "through the Spirit they mortify the deeds "of the body." And it is the characteristic of the unregenerate that they are "sensual," destitute of any other than an animal life, "not "having the Spirit." And "if any man have "not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" "for to be carnally minded is death; but to be "spiritually minded is life and peace."

If any one should be disposed to explain the word "Spirit" in our collect as meaning that holy temper of mind which is implored, we shall not dispute the point; though the former sense seems most eligible. But the alternative is of no great consequence, as the texts of Scripture just quoted, and other passages of our liturgy where the Holy Ghost is unequivocally introduced, will demonstrate that a holy temper of mind in fallen man is entirely the work of the divine Spirit, by whose inspiration alone the thoughts of our hearts can be cleansed, so that we may be enabled to love God, and worthily to magnify his holy name.

The mediate cause of imploring the influence of the Holy Ghost is the sanctification of our thoughts and actions, that they may always be conformed to the rule of right. The prayers of our church are uniformly spiritual. They afford no sanction to that system of mere morality which is frequently substituted for vital godliness. They make no attempt to whiten the outside of a sepulchre which is within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. On the contrary, they constantly enforce the necessity of inward purification, and of a conformity in heart to the divine law. In our present collect the church of England worshipper is taught to pray for the sanctification of his thoughts, as well as of his doings; and for the former as of primary importance, without which the latter is unattainable. Our liturgy makes no use of the figure called Hysteron-proteron, preposterously placing that first which should be last, whereby the souls of men might be deceived and destroyed. The spring must be cleansed, and the

stream in its first efflux therefrom be pure; or the water of a more distant part of its channel cannot be clear and limpid.

Let the reader pause and make an inquiry whether the anxiety of his bosom corresponds with that of the genuine churchman or not. The latter watches over his thoughts as well as his words and works, perceives their natural tendency to aberration from that which is rightful, feels his own inability to conform them to the rule of rectitude, is convinced of the necessity that they should be conformed thereto, and earnestly longs for their entire subjection to the law of God; and therefore he fervently prays for "the Spirit to think and do always those "things that be rightful." On the contrary, the merely nominal member of our church feels no concern about the current of his thoughts, if his exterior conduct be but decent and irreproachable; and even with respect to the latter, he regards rather its appearance before men than its relation to the heart-searching God. The difference between these two characters, in this particular point of dissimilitude, is material and eternally important; for the tree must be made good, before its fruit can be good.

Let it be remembered that our thoughts are cognizable at the bar of God as well as our words and actions; and that their tendency, as it is now a criterion of our spiritual state, will then be a meritorious cause of their condemnation who die without repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and also an evidence of their justification who, through grace, have believed in him. "The thought of foolish-"ness is sin," (Prov. xxiv. 9) and therefore "the "thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to

"the Lord." Prov. xv. 26. In the work of conversion, not only must "the wicked forsake "his way," but also "the unrighteous man his "thoughts." Isa. lv. 7. "Out of the heart "proceed evil thoughts," as from their natural fountain. Matt. xv. 19. For "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil "continually," until it is renewed by divine grace; Gen. vi. 5, and therefore we pray for "the Spirit to think always those things that be "rightful." And oh! how needful it is that we should pray earnestly; since the day is coming "when God shall judge the secrets of men;" and since he will then "bring to light the hidden "things of darkness, and will make manifest the "counsels of the hearts." Rom. ii. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 5.

What, then, is the rule of right to which our thoughts are to be conformed? Doubtless the same which is to regulate our words and actions, namely, the holy law of God. Every transient thought which is contrary to this law, is sinful; a proof of our fallen, guilty, and polluted state, and the seed of actual transgression. But what doth the law require? It requires us to "love "the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, "souls, and strength, and our neighbours as "ourselves." O let us compare the thoughts of our fallen hearts with this extensive and unchangeable rule of right, till we feel the necessity of repairing to the atoning cross, and of fervently using the petition of our collect for the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost!

On the rectitude of our thoughts depends the rectitude of our doings. For what the lips utter and the hands execute, the heart suggests. The heart is the laboratory of practice, and thought

the parent of action. We therefore comply with the dictates both of common sense and of sound divinity, while we give precedence to the thought of our hearts in a prayer for sanctifying grace. For if the tree be made good, the fruit will of consequence be good also. If the fountain be first cleansed, the stream will, of necessity, be pure.

Before we proceed, let us inquire whether this petition of our collect express the genuine desire of our hearts. Do we indeed earnestly wish to have every thought and act sanctified? Let the reader mark the word "always" as it occurs in our collect, and take it into the account before he answers the question proposed to his conscience. The genuine member of the church of England would not have a single thought arise in his bosom which is contrary to the divine will, and much less would he do any thing that would displease his heavenly Father.

Do we discern the necessity of this request? Have we perceived, in consequence of a careful observation of our thoughts, the impossibility of governing them by our own power? As well might we endeavour to control the foaming waves which in swift succession beat on the rocky shore during a violent storm. Let the reader register in his memory a few (for a complete enumeration would be impracticable) of the thoughts which arise within his bosom during a single day; and then consider whether there be not a necessity for deep humiliation, and earnest prayer, both for pardoning and sanctifying grace.

But it may be asked, can we reasonably expect to have our thoughts and doings made "always rightful" during the present state of

imperfection? No, the time will never arrive on this side the grave, in which, if we say that we have no sin, we shall not deceive ourselves. But the believer may expect, in answer to fervent prayer, a growing purity both of heart and life; and every genuine Christian is desirous of having all his thoughts and actions consecrated to God. For this he labours, and looks forward with pleasure to that happy moment when he shall "stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God."

The end for which we implore sanctifying grace is, "that we, who cannot do any thing "that is good without God, may by him be ena-"bled to live according to his will, through Jesus "Christ our Lord."

The declaration of the end proposed in our petition, is preceded by a confession of our natural impotence. On a conviction of personal inability all honest supplication is founded. What we are able to do for ourselves we need not ask another to do for us. Doing, here includes the principle of action as well as the action itself. It comprehends both the branches of the preceding petition. We are as unable to think aright as we are to act aright. Now the truth of our confession must be evident to every enlightened person, both from Scripture and frequent experiment. If any doubt remain on the reader's mind, let him now make the experiment. Let him attempt to elevate his thoughts to a due pitch of devotion, and to keep them uniformly fixed on God for a single hour; and the trial will justify the humiliating language which our church teaches us to use.

If our confession be sincere, oh! how precious will the doctrine of gratuitous justification through faith in Christ prove to our souls! How sweet will the promise of sanctifying grace be to

our hearts! Surely if our minds do not dwell with delight on the rich mercy of God, and the stupendous display thereof which is made in the Gospel; if our bosoms be not dilated with pleasure in the contemplation of a crucified Redeemer, and of a free salvation through his name; we cannot feel our personal inability "to "do any thing that is good." For, admitting that we are believers in a future state of rewards and punishment, we must either suppose ourselves to be capable of recommending ourselves to God, and of standing at the tribunal of God in our own righteousness! or we should joyfully welcome the glad tidings of pardon and acceptance through Christ Jesus. And if we do not also feel the need of divine influence to conform our hearts and lives to the will of God; we must either be utterly indifferent about the attainment of holiness, or altogether ignorant of its nature, and hypocrites in the recital of our present collect.

The end which is proposed in our petition for "the Spirit to think and do always such "things as be rightful," is, "that we may be "enabled by God to live according to his will." This is the grand object of pursuit to every genuine believer in the Gospel of Christ. He wishes not to gratify the corruptions of his own heart, nor to make a fair show in the flesh, but to live according to the divine will. As a drop of water falling into the ocean is so incorporated with it and lost in it that it is thenceforth inseparable from it; in like manner the Christian wants to have his will identified with the divine will, and swallowed up in it. He would have no interest separate or distinct from the glory of God, and no inclination which does not harmonise with his word. He prays to have his heart

and life like a well-tuned instrument, from which no discordant note arises.

That there is no impropriety in praying for perfect holiness, though we know the impossibility of attaining it on this side the grave, is evident from "St. Paul's prayer for the church "of Corinth, that they might not do any evil;" although he knew that no man liveth who sinneth not—although he knew that in this life we always must pray, "Forgive us our sins." "It "is our frailty that in many things we all do "amiss; but a virtue that we would do amiss in "nothing; and a testimony of that virtue, when "we pray that what occasion of sin soever do "offer itself we may be strengthened from above "to withstand it. They pray in vain to have sin "pardoned, which seek not also to prevent sin "by prayer; even every particular sin, by prayer "against all sins; except men can name some "transgression, wherewith we ought to have "truce. For in every deed, although we cannot "be free from all sin collectively, in such sort "that no part thereof be found inherent in us; "yet distributively, at the least all great and "grievous actual offences, as they offer themselves "one by one, both may, and ought to be, by "all means avoided; so that, in this sense, to be "preserved from all sin is not impossible*."

If it should be asked, Why do believers so ardently desire conformity to the will of God? Many substantial reasons for their solicitude may be assigned:—"They consider holy disposi-"tions and good works as the *natural fruit* and "*necessary effect* of that faith which justifies; "as the only *satisfactory evidence* of a justified

* Hooker's Works, vol. ii. p. 190.

" state; as *commanded of God*, and *pleasing and* " *acceptable* to him in Christ; as what we are " bound unto by the most pressing obligations " of *gratitude;* as absolutely requisite in order to " our *meetness* for God's service and heaven; and " as what will fix the *degree* of our blessedness " in eternity." And " are there, can there be, " any more powerful motives to obedience than " those which have been mentioned? What " principles can bind the consciences, interest " the feelings, and influence the conduct, of " Christ's professed disciples, if considerations " like these do not *?"

* Overton's true Churchmen ascertained, p. 293. 296.

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Let thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE privilege of approaching the throne of grace is a blessing of inestimable worth; for there, and there only, is relief of the innumerable wants which guilty man experiences, to be obtained. But it is greatly to be lamented that the majority of professing Christians are strangers to its value, and that even those who have found acceptance at its footstool are not fully conscious of their own privilege, so as to make a due improvement of it.

The encouragement which God has given us to confidence in prayer, is immensely great! The atonement and righteousness of Christ, his intercession, the covenant of grace, and its exceeding great and precious promises, every attribute of Deity, the relation in which believers stand to God and God to them, and the work of the Spirit, especially as a Spirit of grace and supplication—these, and many other considerations which might be specified, lay a foundation for confidence in prayer which cannot be shaken. On these grounds Christian believers may adopt the words of the beloved disciple:—"This is the confidence that "we have in him, that, if we ask any thing

" according to his will, he heareth us. And if " we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, " we know that we have the petitions that we " desired of him." 1 John v. 14, 15.

Our collect for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity contains—a petition for the success of our prayers —and a petition for direction in prayer.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that bodily senses are attributed to God merely for the purpose of conveying just conceptions of him to man. He is " without body, parts, and passions." But our minds can form no idea of pure spirit. Immaterial substance, a being wholly intellectual, is what we cannot comprehend. The Scripture therefore condescends to our weakness by ascribing corporeal senses to incorporeal essence. But language is by no means needful for the purpose of communicating our wants and necessities, our wishes and desires, to our omniscient Friend. Yet language in prayer is often expedient for our own benefit. It is essential to the performance of social worship; and it is often highly useful in solitary devotion, as a mean of exciting our sluggish souls to action, and of preserving our hearts from forgetfulness of the solemn nature of that work in which we are engaged; and of precluding those sinful aberrations, of a liability to which every true supplicant is painfully conscious.

The epithet " merciful," as applied to the ears of the Lord our God, is strictly proper. The repeated declarations of his word; the exceeding great and precious promises which he hath made; the stupendous acts of his grace; the comfortable experience of his people; all concur to demonstrate that his ears are " merciful ears."

God's merciful ears are said to be " open," when

he grants the requests which are presented to him; and shut when he refuses them. Now the ears of the Lord are always open to the prayers of his people. (1 Pet. iii. 12.) They never call on him in vain. The prayer of humility and faith cannot be lost. God the Holy Ghost is the author of every such prayer; and it is presented in the name of Jesus Christ. And surely the prayer which God the Spirit dictates, and which is perfumed with the name of Jesus, cannot be ineffectual—especially if it be considered as the claim of a poor helpless child on the compassion of an indulgent and almighty Father.

That the "ears of the Lord" are always "open to the prayers of his humble servants," appears from many considerations which might be mentioned. For it may be asked, (and conviction must result from the question,) Why were the blessings of redemption provided, and provided at such an expense? Why have they been promised, and promised with so many assurances of sincerity and fidelity in the Promiser? Why are they offered freely, "without money "and without price?"—nay, why are sinners, as it were, entreated to accept them,—if any exception were intended to be made against those who apply for them, or if they were not designed to be actually communicated to every one who is willing to receive them? Were God's "humble servants" more attentive to the dealings of their divine Master, and to his dispensations towards them in outward providence and inward experience, they would more frequently be able to ascertain that the ears of the Lord have been open to their prayers. But, alas! we often ask without desire, and often neglect, after that we have preferred our petition, to wait on

the Lord for its accomplishment. And when desire has been excited within us, we frequently fail of discerning the success of our prayers through inexperience of the Lord's usual mode of dealing with his people. He may sometimes, nay often, fulfil his promises to hear and answer prayer in a very unexpected way. Thus the thrice-repeated request of his servant Paul was granted. (2 Cor. xii. 7–9.) He asked for deliverance from the thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan which was sent to buffet him. But instead of removing it, God gave him grace to bear it patiently, and by its continuance promoted his humiliation at a time when he was in danger of self-exaltation on account of previous divine favours which had been vouchsafed to him. But if God's answers to our prayers do not always correspond exactly with our requests, the change is always for our benefit. *Si non ad voluntatem, ad utilitatem.* If God doth not always act according to the wish of his people, he always acts for their advantage. If, when we implore deliverance from trouble, he gives us patience under it, and enables us to derive profit from it, our prayer is answered, God's promise is fulfilled, and his veracity free from stain. If we solicit consolation, and he prepares us for it by increasing humiliation, our request is granted, and granted in a way that is more conducive to our benefit than if the blessing which we desired of him had been immediately bestowed.

It will perhaps be said, if God's merciful ears are always open to the prayers of his humble servants, why should we pray that they may be open? It has been proved, that the Lord is always waiting to be gracious; yet the prayer of faith and earnest desire is needful to the enjoyment of

the grace which he waiteth to communicate. For God has wisely established a connexion between prayer and the blessings which are sought therein. He excites desire in order that he may fulfil it. He will have his favours valued and enjoyed by those who receive them. They cost too high a price, and are in themselves too precious, to be thrown away on unconscious and unthankful hearts.

The mode of address adopted in our collect is fully justified by many specimens of prayer which are recorded in Scripture. Thus Hezekiah prayed in his distress, (2 Kings xix. 16,) "Lord, bow "down thine ear, and hear; open, Lord, thine "eyes and see." And thus David (Psal. xvii. 6) addresses the Lord his God, "I have called upon "thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline "thine ear unto me, and hear my speech." Similar modes of address we find in other Psalms, (See Psal. lxxi. 2; and lxxxviii. 2.) And, in like manner, Daniel also approached the throne of grace, saying, "O my God, incline thine ear, "and hear; open thine eyes and behold," &c. "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, "hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake." Dan. ix. 18, 19. Now it is very evident that these modes of supplication were not the result of weakness in faith, of any doubt respecting the faithfulness of the divine promises, nor respecting their own interest in them as God's "humble ser- "vants," but that they were natural expressions of importunity and fervent desire*.

Before we dismiss this part of our collect, let us consider the character in which we present ourselves before the mercy-seat. We appear

* See Hooker's Works, vol. ii. p. 180, &c.

there professing ourselves to be God's "humble "servants." But are we indeed such? Are we the servants of God, devoted to his will, and desirous of his approbation and wages? Are we truly humble? Emptied of self-righteousness? And is our dependence only on his mercy? The sacrifice of the wicked is "an abomination to the "Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his "delight." "The Lord is far from the wicked; "but he heareth the prayer of the righteous." "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the "law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Prov. xv. 8. 29; and xxviii. 9. While we continue impenitent and unbelieving, we have no reason to expect that God will listen to our supplications, but rather that he will turn a deaf ear to them. (See Prov. i. 24–33.)

We proceed now to consider the second petition of our collect for direction in prayer. In order "that his humble servants may obtain "their petitions," we beseech God that he would "make them to ask such things as shall please "him."

"The necessity of divine direction in the exercise of prayer is strongly asserted by St. Paul, (Rom. viii. 26,) "Likewise the Spirit also "helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what "we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit "itself maketh intercession for us with groan-"ings which cannot be uttered." As, without divine direction and influence, we cannot ask those things which are pleasing in the sight of God; so neither can we reasonably expect to be heard and answered. Our ignorance and our depravity prevent us from approaching the throne of grace in an acceptable manner. We are ignorant of our own spiritual wants, of the provision

which is made for their supply; of the manner in which alone relief is to be obtained, and of the frame of mind which is essential to our success. We are so depraved, that pride, worldliness, and sensuality leave no room for the admission of spiritual blessings into our fallen hearts.

It is admitted that the desires of impenitent sinners which are not pleasing in the sight of God are sometimes granted. But then the divine compliance with them is not to their advantage. Thus the request of the Israelites in the wilderness for flesh was granted; but "while the flesh "was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, "the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the "people, and the Lord smote the people with a "very great plague." Thus also the prayer of the Israelites, when they besought a king, was answered; but it was answered in wrath. God has complied even with petitions preferred by the devil himself, as we find in the case of Job. (Chap. i. 12; ii. 6; and Luke viii. 32.) It is also evident that the prayers of the Lord's people are not always answered in the specific time and way which they might expect; because, when they ask for such things as are not pleasing in the sight of God, a compliance with their requests would be injurious to their true interests. Thus Moses begged permission to pass over Jordan, and was refused: the sons of Zebedee asked for worldly elevation, and were denied—St. Paul for a removal of the thorn in the flesh, and was answered by the communication of a more suitable and valuable blessing.

Prayer, in order that it may be acceptable, must be offered in a right manner, and have right objects in view. On this subject the remarks of the judicious Hooker are well worthy of being

here transcribed:—"The prayers which our Lord "and Saviour made, were for their own worthi- "ness accepted; ours God accepteth not, but with "this condition*, if they be joined with belief in "Christ. The prayers of the just are accepted "always; but not always those things granted "for which they pray. For in prayer, if faith "and assurance to obtain were both one and "the same thing, seeing that the effect of not "obtaining is a plain testimony that they which "pray were not sure they should obtain; it "would follow, that their prayer being without "certainty of the event, was also made unto "God without faith, and consequently that God "abhorred it. Which to think of so many "prayers of saints as we find have failed in par- "ticular requests, how absurd were it? His "faithful people have this comfort, that whatso- "ever they rightly ask, the same (no doubt, but) "they shall receive, so far as may stand with the "glory of God, and their own everlasting good; "unto either of which two it is no virtuous man's "purpose to seek, or desire to obtain, any thing "prejudicial; and therefore that clause which "our Lord and Saviour in the prayer of his "agony did express, we in petitions of like "nature do always imply:—'Father, if it be "'possible,' if it may stand with thy will and "pleasure. Or, if not, but that there be secret "impediments and causes, in regard whereof the "thing we pray for is denied us; yet the prayer "itself which we make is a pleasing sacrifice to "God, who both accepteth and rewardeth it "some other way. So that sinners in very truth

* Oratio, quæ non fit per Christum, non solum non potest delere peccatum, sed etiam ipsa fit peccatum.—*Aug. Enar.* i. in Psalm cviii.

" are denied when they seem to prevail in their " supplications, because it is not for their sakes, " or to their good, that their suits take place; " the faithful, contrariwise, because it is for their " good that their petitions do not take place, " prevail even when they most seem denied*."

Let us exemplify the goodness of God in his non-compliance with requests made for things which are not pleasing to him by a few common instances. An unconverted man asks for perpetual freedom from affliction, and for all the good things of time and sense, because he is acquainted with nothing that is more worthy of his solicitude. The result of a compliance with such a request is evident. It would deprive him of the usual means of conversion to God and of a preparation for glory. The awakened soul often implores a premature deliverance from the spirit of bondage under which he labours—the believer for a premature removal of affliction, or a premature admission to heaven, or for incessant spiritual consolation. But if God were to grant the petitions of his own people in these and other instances, it would be to their detriment. We are like silly children who would gather their fruit before it is ripe and wholesome.

It may be asked, How may we know what is pleasing in the sight of God?—By his word, and particularly by his promises and commands. Whatever he has promised, that we may safely implore: Whatever he has commanded, for the performance of that we may safely seek his grace. "Thou hast commanded me to keep thy " precepts diligently. O that my ways were " directed to keep thy statutes." Psal. cxix. 4, 5.

* Hooker's Works, vol. ii. p. 181.

A distinction is to be made between temporal and spiritual blessings. Temporal blessings should always be implored with a limitation. For we know not what is good for ourselves, nor what will be conducive to the glory of God; and the promotion of these must be our supreme object in drawing near to God. Spiritual blessings may be asked with less hesitation, because we know that it is the will of God, for his glory and our good, that they should be bestowed on his people. Nevertheless, even these, when specified, are to be asked with submission to the divine will, as to the time, manner, and degree of their communication. Indeed, when we pray for increasing conformity to the divine image, we cannot be too fervent or confident; "for this "is the will of God, even our sanctification." But in imploring comfort we must leave the time, manner, and degree, to God.

The necessity of divine teaching in prayer, and the consequent propriety of the request in our collect, have been already proved. It is necessary to inform our understanding, to correct our judgment, to give a due bias to our will, and a due tone to our affections.

We may rest assured that whatever will be subservient to our real good, God is willing to grant, and that therefore our petitions for it are pleasing to him, and that whatever he withholds from his children would be detrimental to them. O what a blessed "confidence then is this which "we have in him, that if we ask any thing "according to his will, he heareth us. And if "we know that he hear us, we know that we "have the petitions which we asked of him." Let us endeavour to realise the truth of his promises. Let us make them the subjects of con-

stant meditation. Let us ask him to teach us what we are to pray for. And then let us ask largely, confidently, perseveringly. He hath said, "Open thy mouth widely; and I will fill it."

"Now because there is no man's prayer "acceptable whose person is odious, neither any "man's person gracious without faith; it is of "necessity required, that they which pray do "believe*." Therefore we conclude our prayers with the adorable Mediator's name, asking all that we want, and instruction in asking, "through "Jesus Christ our Lord."

Hooker's Works, vol. ii. p. 181.

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, who declarest thy almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity; mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace, that we, running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure, though Jesus Christ our Lord.

To a wretched criminal under sentence of condemnation, how grateful would such a description of his sovereign prove as that which the Psalmist has drawn of God, when he says that "he "delighteth in mercy!" Well may his people with adoring gratitude express their admiration of "the riches of his grace;" well may they encourage themselves to hope for all the blessings of redemption. For it is not said, that God may be induced by earnest and patient importunity to shew mercy with a sparing and reluctant hand; not merely that he may, consistently with his other perfections, exercise compassion, though this would have been joyful tidings to a lost sinner; but it is asserted that "he delighteth in "mercy." And oh! what abundant proof hath he given that the record is true! The gift of his Son, and the uniform experience of his people, testify that he "waiteth to be gracious."

With the Psalmist's representation of the divine character agrees exactly the whole tenour

of our present collect; of which the preface asserts, that God "declareth his almighty power "most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity." On this preface a prayer for grace is founded; and the ends are specified for which it is implored.

That God is possessed of "almighty power" needs no proof. Creation and providence afford evidence which every one may read who is not wilfully blind. Indeed, a being possessed of limited ability would be unworthy the name of God. This "almighty power" God might justly have employed for the destruction of the whole human race. He might have thrust every individual of mankind into hell, because all men by sin have incurred the penalty of his holy and righteous law. "The wages of sin is death"—a death which appears from the Apostle's antithesis to be of eternal duration. But because "he delighteth in mercy," his "almighty power "is chiefly declared in shewing mercy and pity." Though all the attributes of Jehovah must harmonize in every act which he performs; though neither of his perfections can be glorified at the expense of another; yet, if we may so speak, his mercy seems to have the direction of his other attributes. It appears to be the prominent and predominant feature of the divine character. "God is love." Angels perhaps may admire with equal regard all the perfections of the Godhead, dwell on them with equal satisfaction, and extol them with equal adoration. But it is natural for us, in our present state of mental imbecility, to be chiefly captivated with that divine perfection which seems most adapted to the relief of our misery. "Mercy and pity" suggested a way of satisfying the claims of inviolable justice, and of vindicating the honour of immaculate

holiness, consistently with the salvation of lost sinners. And, having done this, they employ "almighty power" for the execution of the gracious purposes which they had formed.

That "almighty power" was necessary to be exerted in order that God might shew mercy and pity, is evident. For mercy could not be shewn, until a full satisfaction had been made to divine justice for those who were to partake of it; and that satisfaction divinity alone could make. Hence arose the necessity of a Mediator in whom God and man should be united. For as the manhood only could suffer the penalty due to man's transgression, the Godhead only could give availableness to the sufferings of the manhood, so as to render them satisfactory to the requisitions of inexorable justice. Moreover, "mercy and pity" could only display themselves through the medium of man's conversion to God. And conversion to God can only be effected by the interference of "almighty power," as Scripture and experience concur to testify. The plan of mercy could not be perfected but by a continued exertion of Omnipotence. For, without this, progressive sanctification, conservation, and glorification, could not be accomplished.

Let the reader attend to two important words which are introduced into our collect for the purpose of preventing mistakes. "God declareth "his almighty power *most chiefly* in shewing "mercy and pity." There will be monuments of his wrath as well as of his mercy. His almighty power will be displayed in the manifestation of his holiness and justice, by the destruction of all impenitent sinners who reject the proposal of his grace. The rebellious "angels, which kept not "their first estate, but left their own habitation,

"and are reserved in everlasting chains under "darkness unto the judgment of the great day;" the old world, which, "being overflowed with "water, perished" in one watery grave; "Sodom "and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, "which are set forth for an example, suffering "the vengeance of eternal fire;" the existence of "Tophet" which was "ordained of old;" all the righteous threatenings of the Scriptures; and even redemption itself;—demonstrate the propriety with which the exceptive words we have specified are introduced into our collect. Though Jehovah hath proclaimed his name to be "the "LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gra-"cious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness "and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, for-"giving iniquity, transgression and sin;" yet he adds, that "he will by no means clear the guilty." (Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.) He accumulates expression for the purpose of assuring us, that he "declareth his almighty power most chiefly in "shewing mercy and pity." But there is also a restrictive clause, which proves that it is not exclusively and invariably by acts of grace that his "almighty power" is shewn; for he "will "by no means clear the guilty." "The Lord "our God is holy," and necessarily abhors all moral evil. And though he delighteth not in the death of a sinner, yet his own perfections bind him, as it were, to punish sin. The "mercy and pity" of the divine bosom can only be shewn to those who embrace by faith the appointed sacrifice of Christ, "in whom God is "just and the justifier of him that believeth in "Jesus," by whose sacrifice the evil of sin is most awfully displayed. "Except we repent," therefore, "we must all perish;" for God shews

his " mercy and pity" to those who, being made partakers of his grace, " repent and believe the " Gospel;" forgiving mercy being always accompanied with converting power. O let us then " fly for refuge to the hope set before us in the " Gospel," and lay hold on the horns of the altar, for " our God is a consuming fire, even a jealous " God;" and " it is a fearful thing to fall into his " hands" without faith in the " one Mediator " between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." For all resistance will be in vain, seeing that " almighty power" will be employed in " taking " vengeance on them that know not God, and " that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus " Christ." The escape of the impenitent and the unbeliever is impossible; for God has positively declared that " the wicked shall not go " unpunished."

On this comfortable truth that " God declareth " his almighty power most chiefly in shewing " mercy and pity," we found a petition for his grace, the stream which flows from the fountain of his " mercy and pity." It is a stream accommodated to various uses. For, like water its emblem, it is adapted both to refreshment and purification. Pardon, justification, sanctification, and eternal life, are constituent parts of the stream of grace which issues from the fountain of divine mercy. But the boon which is here specified is the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost.

The sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost is called " grace," because it is a gratuitous communication of divine favour to which we have no claim of merit or congruity. And it is grace indeed which cleanseth a sinner from the " filthi- " ness of the flesh and spirit," and enables him to " perfect holiness in the fear of God;" since,

without it, we are and must remain wholly incapacitated for heavenly happiness, and fit only for the abodes of everlasting darkness.

This divine influence is communicated to its recipients in different degrees, apportioned to the situations and circumstances in which they are placed. Some of the redeemed require for the fulfilment of incumbent duties a larger measure of God's grace than others; and a larger measure is also necessary to the same person at some seasons than at others. We, who are raised up to serve and honour God at a time when Christianity is the established religion of the country in which we live, and when, of consequence, persecution for the profession of the Gospel is deprived of its terrors; have no need of grace for the production of that faith by which miracles were performed in the primitive church, nor of that which enabled the martyrs to rejoice in the midst of excruciating tortures. If we wanted it, we should be warranted to pray for and to expect it. But we all want grace whereby we may be enabled to "run the way of "God's commandments," so as to "obtain his "gracious promises, and be made partakers of "his heavenly treasure." And no conscious sinner will think the communication of such a measure of grace as may effect this purpose to be a small favour. No awakened person will deem a small measure of grace sufficient to secure his salvation. For every believer, being experimentally acquainted with his own innate depravity and weakness, with the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, with the trials of the Christian pilgrimage, and the difficulties with which his path is on all sides surrounded at every step, will be ready to say, Surely no one ever

wanted a larger measure of divine grace than myself; for no one can have more guilt to be removed, more corruption to be subdued, more temptations to be resisted, or less strength wherewith to oppose them. I am a bruised reed, liable to injury from every invader,—an expiring taper which Omnipotence alone, continually exerted in my behalf, can preserve from extinction. Nothing short of that "almighty power" which is "declared most chiefly in shewing mercy and "pity," can supply my wants, relieve my necessities, and save my soul. Without hope founded exclusively thereon, I must utterly despair.

The proposed complex object for which we implore grace is deeply interesting to us all. Ability to obey the will of God by "running the "way of his commandments, so as to obtain "his gracious promises, and be made partakers "of his heavenly treasure," is an object worthy of our ambition, and that demands the utmost fervency of spirit in prayer. This is a blessing without which we must be eternally miserable. If these pages should fall into the hands of any one who is indifferent about it, let him stop and contemplate his own folly. Let him consider how blinded and besotted he is. Surely the God of this world hath awfully closed his eyes against the light of truth, so as to preclude him from a discovery of his own interests, wants, and miseries. If this prayer as used by any reader hath passed over feigned lips, let such a one remember that he is "an alien from the commonwealth of "Israel," the members of which all find that without the grace of God they can do nothing.

The mediate object of our petition for grace is an ability to "run the way of God's command-"ments." God's commandments constitute the

way in which we must go, in order that we may reach the city of habitation where we would dwell. But "we have all erred and strayed from this "way like lost sheep. We have done what we "ought not to have done; and have left undone "what we ought to have done." And so deplorable is our state, that we have neither the will nor power to return into it; for "there is no "health in us," no spiritual vigour, whereby we can retrace our wanderings so as to regain the path of righteousness. "The carnal mind is "enmity against God: it is not subject to the "law of God, neither indeed can be." The commandments of God are all in direct opposition to the inclinations of fallen man, while he continues in his natural state. They cramp his sensual pleasures, and restrain him from those pursuits which are congenial to his corrupt taste. Therefore he hates them, and turns with disgust from the holy way which they present to his view.

The members of our church are supposed to be converted persons; that is, to be recovered from their wanderings, and to be restored to "the high "way of holiness." Language is therefore put into their mouths, which is adapted exclusively to persons who are in the way, and desirous of making greater progress in it. Reader, is the supposition founded respecting thyself? Dost thou discern that the way of God's commandments is the way of pleasantness and the path of peace? Dost thou perceive that thy happiness must be apportioned to thy stedfastness and celerity of progress in this way? Is it the desire of thy soul that thy pace may be quickened? Happy are those persons who can say with the holy Psalmist, "O how love I thy law! all the day "long is my study in it."

The believer finds himself to be so injured in his spiritual powers, in consequence of his past wanderings, that, when brought into the way of God's commandments, so far from being able to run therein, he is incapacitated for walking, or even for crawling in the sacred road. "There "is no health in him." He is like the paralytics whom our Lord healed, incapable of lifting up himself and of taking one step in his journey Sion-wards, without continual communications of strength from God. And even when he begins to move forward, the smallest pebble turns his foot aside, and endangers his stumbling—the merest molehill is insurmountable to his unassisted efforts. He sees the indispensable necessity of going forward, of making progress, yet finds himself so lame, that he cannot move, or at best moves with extreme difficulty and tardiness. What can he do? he adopts the only measure which wisdom dictates; and, instead of lying down in despair, he cries "to the strong for strength"—"Lord, "mercifully grant unto me such a measure of "thy grace, that I may run the way of thy "commandments."

If the reader be not conscious of remaining infirmities, it is because the spiritual palsy, under which he labours, has deprived him of all sensation. For all who have been "made alive unto "God by Jesus Christ our Lord," have felt and loudly bewailed their total imbecility. They have found themselves to be defective in power, even after their will has been converted to holiness. "When I would do good," saith St. Paul, "evil is present with me. I love the law of God "after the inner man; but I find another law in "my members warring against the law of my "mind, and bringing me into captivity to the

" law of sin that is in my members. Wretched " man that I am! who shall deliver me from the " body of this death?"

Thus did an inspired Apostle express his feelings, which harmonise exactly with those that are supposed by our present collect to exist in all the members of our church. And therewith also corresponds the language of Old Testament saints. For one of them thus expresses himself:—" I will " run the way of thy commandments, when thou " shalt enlarge my heart*." Various are the degrees of enlargement which the human mind attains. The desires of some men are bounded within very narrow limits indeed. To eat, to drink, and to sleep, seem to comprehend all their wishes. These differ but little from the beasts that perish. The minds of other men move in a much wider circuit. Alexander is said to have wept, because, when he had conquered one world, he had not another to subdue. Men of science are never satisfied with present attainments. Lovers of the world, after an accumulation of immense wealth, still reach out for more. But narrow are the minds of the children of this world, however extended be their views, compared with those of the Christian. Time with all its stores cannot satisfy him. The creature is too poor to suit his expanded soul. To " obtain " God's promises, and to be made a partaker of " his heavenly treasure through Jesus Christ his " Lord," is the worthy aim of his ambition. And,

* There is strict philosophical propriety in the expression which the Psalmist has used. For the heart is dilated, and the pulse by consequence becomes full and strong, by emotions of hope and delight. And, on the contrary, the heart is contracted, and the pulse rendered languid, by distress, fear, disappointment, and despair.

in order to this, he knows that he must learn to "run the way of God's commandments."

There is an inseparable connexion between holiness and happiness. The former is an essential pre-requisite to the latter. Holiness, however, is not the meritorious cause of happiness, but the means of attaining it, and the qualification for enjoying it. The means and the end are both of grace.

In "running the way of God's command-"ments" we shall assuredly "obtain his gracious "promises." Those "exceeding great and pre-"cious promises," with which the horizon of Scripture is more numerously and richly studded than the sky with stars, may well be denominated "gracious," because they originate wholly in the grace of God, independently of human desert, which is no where to be found. These promises ensure to the Christian traveller support and encouragement throughout his course of obedience. Some of them were fulfilled in his experience, before he began his heavenly race; for it was by the agency of promised grace that he has been brought into the road which leads to Zion. Others are fulfilling in every step that he takes; for it is by means of promised grace that he continues in the way, and is enabled to make any progress therein. And the remainder of the promises cannot fail of being accomplished in the everlasting salvation of his soul. He will derive from the fulness of Christ help and refreshment in the residue of his pilgrimage; he will be upheld and strengthened to the end of life; he will be enabled to conquer every difficulty, and to surmount every obstacle, and at length be "made a "partaker of God's heavenly treasure."

A treasure is riches accumulated and laid up

in store. Heavenly happiness is often spoken of in Scripture under the notion of a treasure. (See Matt. vi. 19–21; xiii. 44; xix. 21; Luke xii. 33.) This is treasure indeed, with which the wealth of Crœsus will bear no comparison. It is placed out of the reach of accident. For God's heavenly storehouse is secure from the corroding moth of time, and from the ravages of the infernal robber. The keeper of this heavenly treasure is our almighty Redeemer, who will, doubtless, preserve the treasure which he bought with his own blood for the enjoyment of his redeemed people. Of what the treasure consists we cannot now particularly specify. A general inventory is, however, put into our hands, from which we may know enough to fire our souls with eager haste in pursuing the way that leads to its possession. And when the accumulated store is disclosed to our view, it will exceed all the most elevated conceptions which we had previously formed concerning it. It is inexhaustible, and will fully satisfy the desires of all who are made partakers of it.

If the reader should unhappily feel no concern to obtain grace whereby he may be enabled to "run the way of God's commandments," let him know that altogether vain is his expectation of heavenly treasure, if he have formed any. O let him contemplate his gross hypocrisy in adopting the collect of our church which we have now reviewed, and in making use of its language as expressive of his own desires when no such desires prevail within his bosom. His hope in divine "mercy and pity" is a fatal delusion and must perish.

But there are many persons who are anxiously desirous to run the way of God's commandments, so as to obtain his promises and be partakers of

his heavenly treasure, who are discouraged by the continual short comings of which they are conscious. Let them remember that our collect supposes this consciousness to exist in all the true members of our communion; and that, if it were not felt, an essential mark of membership with the Catholic church would be wanting. Let the humble penitent therefore join in our petition, assured that they who ask for grace shall receive it, because they ask "through "Jesus Christ our Lord."

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve; pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy, forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son our Lord. Amen.

How amiable does our heavenly Father appear, while we hear him addressing his church in those gracious words, (Isa. lxv. 24,) "It shall "come to pass that, before they call, I will "answer; and whilst they are yet speaking, I "will hear." It is not enough for the purpose of shewing the extent of his mercy and loving kindness, that he should promise to hear the prayers of his people who call upon him; but he engages to anticipate their desires, and to prevent their wants. The spirit of prayer is his gift, and the earnest of the blessings which are implored. He knows our wants before we ourselves know them, and our perception of them is the effect of his grace prepared to supply them.

This gracious promise confirms the representation which is made in our collect for this day, which consists of an introduction and a prayer.—The introduction exhibits the grace of God in that he is "more ready to hear than we to pray,

" and wont to give more than either we desire or " deserve." This is the plea which faith employs, and the source from whence it derives encouragement.—The prayer implores abundant mercy, for the pardon of sin and a supply of all those blessings of which we stand in need.

How sweet and encouraging a consideration is that which is suggested by the introduction of our collect, that God is " more ready to hear " than we are to pray!" The blessings which we need, vast and glorious as they are, are not to be wrenched by importunity from a reluctant hand; but the adorable Giver professes himself to be honoured and pleased by communicating to us. Hence he commands us to pray; and how much soever we may have asked and received from him, he is not satisfied with his own bountiful past communications; but he bids us to ask for more, saying, " Open thy mouth wide, " and I will fill it." If we gave credit to this statement, what delight would it afford us in approaching the throne of grace! How often should we repair thither! What large requests should we make! And how would our souls be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and our mouth praise him with joyful lips! The statement is strictly true, for it is confirmed by repeated promises and declarations; and " though " we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he " cannot deny himself." He hath assured us, that he " will be very gracious unto us at the " voice of our cry; and that when he shall hear " it, he will answer us" (Isa. xxx. 19); that he, " our heavenly Father, knoweth what things we " have need of, before we ask him" (Matt. vi. 8); that he is " nigh unto all them who call " upon him—to all that call upon him in truth;

" that he will fulfil the desire of them that fear " him, that he will hear their cry and will save " them." Psal. cxlv. 18–19. Of the truth of these promises, and of the declaration in the introduction to our collect, we have a striking exemplification in the case of David, who had no sooner confessed his sin than Nathan under divine direction assured him, even before he could ask for pardon, " The Lord hath put away thy sin, " thou shalt not die." 2 Sam. xii. 13. To this the royal penitent refers, when he says, (Psal. xxxii. 5,) " I acknowledge my sin unto thee, " and my iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will " confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and " so thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." And then from his own blessed experience he foretels, that succeeding penitents should meet with like success, seeing they would have to do with him who is " the same yesterday, to-day, and " for ever." " For this," he adds, namely, the pardon of sin, " shall every one that is godly," every gracious* person on whom the grace of penitence hath been bestowed, " pray unto thee " in a time when thou mayest be found"—" the " acceptable time, the day of salvation." And such is the whole period of human life to the broken and contrite heart.

That we are backward to pray is too evident to be denied, and a proof of our folly that is exceedingly humiliating. A needy creature, made up of wants, yet reluctant to ask for relief, when it may be freely obtained, and when the donor considers himself to be honoured in bestow-

* חסד Exuberant mercy. See Parkhurst on the word. The word *gracious* is used in a passive sense, to describe a recipient of grace, by Dr. Bennett, in his work on " pre- " conceived prayer;" and by the judicious Hooker.

ing it, is a strange phenomenon of idiotism or insanity. What a stupid irrational creature is fallen man! We will try to point out some of the causes of this backwardness to pray, so soon as we have premised that it is on Christian believers that this sinful backwardness is chargeable. For our collect is adapted to their use exclusively; and indeed none but they know any thing of prayer, its necessity, nature, or advantages.

The remaining carnality of our hearts is the grand cause of that reluctance to address the throne of grace of which all believers are conscious and complain. The affections are so occupied about worldly objects that spiritual ones are not duly appreciated. A full vessel can admit no more; and if more be poured into it, the new infusion must run over the brim and be spilt on the ground. Now, although the mind of a true believer is not full of the world as it was before conversion, yet neither is it entirely emptied of its original contents. So that, though some room is made for the water of life, yet the space for its admission is still scanty. In proportion as worldly desires are suppressed, spiritual ones arise.

From this general cause of backwardness to prayer proceeds an insensibility of our spiritual wants. Our spiritual appetite is kept in a diseased state by the unwholesome trash with which we continually load it. Oh! were we fully sensible of our pressing wants, and of the gracious supply which God hath provided for them, our backwardness to pray would be turned into eager desire; we should ask and receive till our joy was complete.

Another cause of this backwardness to pray

is unbelief. We give a doubtful and hesitating credit to the repeated declarations of divine mercy. Hence we expect to derive but little advantage from prayer. (James i. 5, &c.) We do not realise to ourselves the existence, value, and possibility of enjoying the blessings of the Gospel, for want of that faith which is "the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence "of things not seen." We regard them either as of small importance, or as being out of our reach, and therefore do not strive to obtain them.

We shall specify but one obstruction more in the duty of prayer, *viz.* the pride and self-sufficiency of fallen man. This not only precludes us, so far as it prevails, from a discovery of our spiritual wants, but it also raises objections in our minds to the appointed mode of supply. It cannot stoop to receive gratuitously what it cannot meritoriously obtain. The inscription which appears in large and golden letters on the canopy of the throne of grace, "WITHOUT "MONEY, WITHOUT PRICE," creates offence. How ridiculous a sight is the haughty strut, the stately gait, the affected dignity, of poverty in rags—of starving indigence, which would rather perish than be indebted to the ready bounty of the beneficent when offered for acceptance! That continual dependence on divine liberality, in which true humility glories, is opposed by the remaining self-righteousness of our hearts; and hence prayer is restrained.

That God is always prompt to hear and answer prayer, is equally as evident as that we are backward to "pour out our hearts before him." "He waiteth to be gracious." He not only commands and encourages us to present our suits

before his mercy-seat—he not only promises to comply with our requests, and to fulfil our desires —he not only engages to pardon the imperfections, which debase our best supplications, and to listen to the feeblest cry which reaches his ears; but "he waiteth to be gracious." He stands, as it were, with the blessings of the cross in his hands, watching for the favourable moment in which he may confer them on us—in which the "miserable, wretched, blind, and naked" sinner will condescend to receive them from him. O wonderful grace! rich mercy! divine compassion!—The readiness of God to comply with the requests of his people may be proved by various considerations.

It appears from the existence of that gracious covenant which the persons of Jehovah have made respecting the redemption and salvation of man. This "covenant is ordered in all things "and sure," as the Spirit of inspiration hath informed us by the pen of the prophet David. It is "everlasting" both in its origin and continuance. Its blessings, which comprehend all things that a sinner can need, are provided expressly for the use of all those among the fallen sons of Adam who are willing to partake of them. They have been purchased by the blood of him who is the surety of the covenant, and are placed in his hands to be communicated to all who by faith and prayer apply for them. Now, why was this covenant made? Why, when made, was it revealed? Why has it been confirmed by the solemn oath of the high contracting parties, and by the blood of the divine Surety? Doth not all this demonstrate that God "is more ready "to hear than we to pray?" The "exceeding "great and precious promises" of the covenant

of grace are "all yea in Christ, and in him "Amen, to the glory of God." Provision is made for the honour of every divine attribute; and the utmost security is given to the conscious sinner who wishes to share in promised blessings. Did man solicit redemption before it was revealed and promised? Was not the "unspeak-"able gift" conferred independently of any entreaty on the part of man? And "if God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him "up for us all, how shall he not with him also "freely give us all things?" God was under no obligation to provide a remedy for human misery. The scheme of mercy was the spontaneous contrivance of his own gracious bosom, antecedent to any solicitation, yea to human existence. The work of the Spirit, by which the redeemed soul is made an actual partaker of redemption, is not, in the first instance at least, the effect of prayer. Our first convictions of guilt and helplessness are altogether unsought; and even the subsequent conversion of the fallen soul from sin to holiness, in all its progressive stages, is of mere grace; for every holy desire in the conscious mind is from God.

That "God is more ready to hear than we to "pray," may further be argued from the manifestative glory which God derives from the communication of his saving benefits. All his attributes are honoured by his audience of our prayers and compliance with our requests. His justice, mercy, holiness, faithfulness, omniscience, omnipotence, are all magnified, while he listens to "the prayer of the poor destitute" who implores his grace. He gives without impoverishing himself, and hath chosen this way of exhibiting the glories of his name.

We need not enlarge on the subsequent clause in the preface of our collect, that "God is wont "to give more than either we desire or deserve," after what has been said on the first branch. Our desires are faint and limited. Our deservings are entirely out of the question. Were we to receive what we deserve, our portion would be terrible indeed. Were we to receive no more than we desire, we should fall very short of those "good "things which God hath prepared for them that "love him." The experience of every awakened sinner demonstrates that "God is wont to give "more than either we desire or deserve;" for his desires reach not to that "abundance of grace "and of the gift of righteousness" which is conferred upon him. The doctrine is further illustrated throughout the believer's course; and will be eternally confirmed by the inconceivable riches of "the inheritance which is incorruptible, un-"defiled, and fadeth not away." It has already been exemplified in our redemption by means which could never have entered into the conception of man,—in our adoption which raises us to an alliance to which we could never have aspired: and these benefits are preparatory to "a crown "of glory" too dazzling for human imagination.

We proceed to consider the prayer of our collect, which is founded on the consolatory preface we have reviewed. We beseech God to "pour "down upon us the abundance of his mercy, "forgiving us those things whereof our con-"science is afraid, and giving us those good "things which we are not worthy to ask, but "through the merits and mediation of Jesus "Christ his Son our Lord."

We are taught to implore an "abundance of "mercy," because in the judgment of our

church we all need it. And her judgment is formed on mature deliberation and the clearest evidence. For when the number and quality of our sins, and the number and extent of our wants, are considered, it will appear that "abund-"ance of mercy" is indeed needful for the pardon of the former and the relief of the latter. This every conscious sinner feels, and therefore can heartily join in the petition of our collect. He cannot be satisfied with asking for a few scanty drops of grace; an ocean of mercy, unbounded and unfathomable, is necessary to banish despair from his bosom, and to "fill him with joy and "peace in believing."

All that the conscious sinner needs is to be found in God. "With him there is mercy, "and with him is plenteous redemption." Every attribute of Deity is infinite; and, among his other perfections, his mercy. The source from which we seek mercy is infinite compassion; the channel through which it flows is infinite merit; and the hand by which it is applied is infinite power. The effects which it hath produced in the "great cloud of witnesses" who are now before the throne, are such as preclude despair; nay, they lay a foundation for hope and confidence which cannot be shaken. We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves. From our own unbelief originate all the doubts and fears which agitate and distress our souls.

The special purposes for which we implore this "abundance of mercy," are—the removal of the evils which we have deserved by forgiveness of sins,—and the communication of the good which we need, though wholly undeserved.

We implore through God's abundant mercy "the forgiveness of all those things whereof our

"conscience is afraid." The conscience of a sinner who is taught of God, as the members of our church are supposed to be, perceives grounds of fear to which others are strangers. It appreciates, with some small degree of accuracy, the magnitude of the guilt which it has contracted, and knows that "the wages of sin is death." It can therefore enjoy no peace, but as it has recourse to the abounding mercy of God, and the cross of the all-atoning Redeemer. It is instructed in that capital point of Bible-divinity, that "without shedding of blood there is no "remission;" and it has proved its own inability to apply that blood to its own comfort without the almighty grace of God the Holy Ghost.

The genuine believer, though his understanding is enlightened and his judgment convinced, and a full persuasion produced in his soul that "the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "cleanseth from all sin," yet hath his seasons of fear and apprehension. He trembles at times, when sin is exhibited to his view in its horrible deformity and demerit, and when he obtains a glimpse of the immaculate purity that dwells in God, lest his sins should be too heinous and aggravated to be forgiven. There are moments of darkness in his experience, when the glory of the Mediator's person and work is eclipsed, and hidden from his view, by the thick clouds of unbelief, and then distress necessarily prevails within him. But perhaps the most common cause of perplexity is a doubt, inferred from his own remaining imperfection, of his interest in the atoning Saviour. And even when the hope of forgiveness for past transgressions is most lively, the propriety of supplication for pardon

is not superseded; for the Christian believer knows that in every moment, in every thought, word, and deed, he contracts fresh guilt, for the removal of which fresh discoveries of abundant mercy are indispensably necessary. The frequent use of such a prayer as that which our collect supplies will therefore suit the sensibilities of all genuine churchmen.

The second purpose for which we implore abundant mercy is the communication of the multifarious good of which we stand in need. Our wants, both those of our bodies and those of our souls, are innumerable. For, with respect to every blessing necessary to the welfare either of soul or body, we are entirely dependent on the providence and grace of God. We shall not aim at an impossibility by an attempt to enumerate the good things which we need. An endeavour to calculate the number of the sands which encircle the shore of the ocean, or the drops of which the ocean is composed, would be preposterous.

The very least of all those good things which we need, "we are unworthy to ask;" for so far from having merited any good at the hand of God, we have deserved nothing but evil, pure unmixed evil. "It is of the Lord's mercies; "that we are not consumed; because his com-"passions fail not." We have therefore no plea, derived from ourselves, why "judgment without "mercy" should not be executed on us by our final exclusion from the favour and presence of God, and by our condemnation to eternal misery. Whatever we contemplate that is personal and our own, is calculated to preclude us from the enjoyment of any good.

But, "the merits and mediation of Jesus "Christ, the Son of God, our Lord," afford a solid basis to our hope of obtaining every blessing from his hands who is "more ready to "hear than we to pray, and who is wont to "give more than either we desire or deserve." Though we have no personal merit to plead, yet there is in him "enough and to spare." And his superabundant merit is made ours by divine imputation so soon as we believe in his name. It is ours for all the important purposes of salvation for which we need it. The adorable dignity of his person, the all-cleansing virtue of his atonement, the all-sufficient efficacy of his righteousness, and the never-failing prevalency of his intercession, form our only and successful plea for obtaining a plenary pardon of "all those "things of which our conscience is afraid," and the gratuitous donation of "all those good "things which we are" utterly "unworthy to "ask" on our own account. May his "merits "and mediation" be our source of comfort in life and death; and in eternity the subject of our everlasting praise*!

* The collect which we have now reviewed was objected to by some of the early enemies of the liturgy, as savouring "of the Popish servile fear"—a most groundless charge, which Hooker has refuted most fully, Eccles. Polity, vol. ii. p. 177, &c. Oxford edition. At the close of his vindication the judicious author says, "The knowledge "of our unworthiness is not without belief in the merits of "Christ. With that true fear which the one causeth, there "is coupled true boldness and encouragement drawn from "the other. The very silence which our unworthiness "pulleth us unto, doth itself make request for us, and that "in the confidence of his grace. Looking inward we are "stricken dumb; looking outward we speak and prevail. "O happy mixture, wherein things contrary do so qualify

" and correct the one the danger of the other's excess,
" that neither boldness can make us presume, as long as we
" are kept under with the sense of our own wretchedness;
" nor, while we trust in the mercy of God through Jesus
" Christ, fear be able to tyrannize over us! As therefore
" our fear excludeth not that boldness which becometh
" saints, so, if our familiarity with God do not savour of
" this fear, it draweth too near that irreverent confidence,
" wherewith true humility can never stand."

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh, that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service; grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It has been said that the Romish missionaries in China, being ashamed to own a crucified Redeemer, kept the sufferings of Christ out of sight; and that, instead of preaching Christ crucified, they preached Christ glorified. This mode of conduct might subserve the ends of worldly policy; but it could not be pleasing to God, nor promote his cause and the salvation of men's souls. Our blessed Lord in his conduct towards his disciples has acted a very different part. For he has faithfully forewarned them that difficulty, reproach, persecution, and tribulation, must be their portion in the present world. "He that "loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth "his life in this world, shall keep it unto life "eternal." He teaches them that his servants must follow their divine Master in his own track, and "know the fellowship of his sufferings." If any man serve me, let him "follow me." But withal he has afforded encouragement to their faith sufficient to counterbalance all the hardships of their service; for he adds, "Where I am,

"there shall also my servants be: if any man "serve me, him will my Father honour."

Assured that there is a close connexion between the service of God and the rewards which he will bestow, and convinced of the difficulty which attends the service of God in consequence of human corruption, we are this day taught to implore divine grace, "that we may so faithfully "serve God in this life, that we fail not finally "to attain his heavenly promises, through the "merits of Jesus Christ our Lord."

Our collect consists of a preface and a prayer. In the former we ascribe to God the glory of all the service which his people are enabled to perform—and in the latter we implore his aid, that we may continue "faithful unto death, and "receive the crown of glory."

We address the object of our worship as "almighty and merciful," because Omnipotence combined with mercy is necessary to afford us a ground for hope in the petition which we offer. For "almighty" power alone can enable us to "do unto God true and laudable service;" and mercy must engage that power in our favour, accept our imperfect service when performed, and recompense it with a reward of "grace, not "of debt." That man who is conscious of his own demerit and imbecility will feel the propriety with which these attributes of the divine character are introduced into our collect.

God has a people in the world who are distinguished from all other people. They are called by St. Peter his "peculiar people," because, though they are now mingled among "the men "of the world who have their portion in this life, "as tares among wheat," yet they belong to him as his property, and are known of him.

"The Lord knoweth them that are his." And as they are now distinguishable from others by the peculiar sensibilities of their hearts, and the peculiar conduct of their lives, so will they be hereafter distinguished from the world by the favour and approbation of their Master and King; when he shall place them on his right hand, and address them, saying, "Well done, good and "faithful servants." Then will the great assembly be able to "discern between the righteous and "the wicked, between him that serveth God and "him that serveth him not," without any possibility of a mistake respecting either the persons, character, or advantages, of God's "faithful "people."

The grand characteristic of the Lord's people is used in our collect for the purpose of distinguishing them from all other persons, whether within the pale of the visible church or without it. They are a "faithful people." Faithfulness, or fidelity, is a complex character, of which faith is the root. And therefore it is frequently used as the characteristic of God's people. (See Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 2, &c.) The nature of faith, as the principle of our allegiance to the King of kings, must be a subject of high importance. It is not a mere human assent to divine truth as proposed to the understanding, but it is a cordial consent to that way of salvation which is proposed in the Gospel of Christ. It is the arm by which the lost soul of a sinner embraces the divine Saviour as his "wisdom, righteousness, sanctifi-"cation, and redemption." It is the tendril* by

*אבטיחים Numb. xi. 5, signifies "fruits or plants of the "pepo or melon kind, which by their tendrils *cling* to "whatever they can lay hold on, and so support themselves."—*Parkhurst.* It is derived from a root which is

which the feeble plant entwines itself around its appointed supporter, and so connects itself therewith as to be incorporated indissolubly; just as we see the ivy, by a series of roots co-extensive with its stem, adhering to the oak and grown into its substance. In consequence of this union, nourishment as well as support is derived from Christ to the believing soul. Faith is, moreover, the soder*, by which the branch of the seven-fold candlestick in the temple of God is firmly fastened to the central stem, from which it receives the oil whereby it burns and enlightens. The precedence and importance of this grace arises from the nature of its office in the justification of a sinner's person before God, in which it acts instrumentally by embracing that which is the meritorious cause of it, the righteousness of Christ. And in this great work it is to be considered as apart and distinct from all its effects; for "to him that worketh "not, but believeth on him that justifieth the "ungodly, is faith imputed for righteousness." But this grace is also the parent of all other graces: for it "worketh by love;" and "this "is the love of God, that we keep his command-"ments."

"The faith of God's elect" is invariably productive of obedience, for his "faithful people do "him service." His holy will is their rule, and his glory their end. The nature and extent of their service is described by St. Paul, when he exhorts the Romans to an unreserved surrender

commonly used in the Old Testament for the purpose of expressing the act or habit of faith.

* דבק by which the act of faith is often described, is used, Isa. xli. 7, for the soder or cement used by the Metallurgist.

of themselves to it. "I beseech you, brethren, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your "bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to "God, which is your reasonable service." As in the sacrifice of an holocaust the whole animal was to be laid on God's altar, and appropriated to him, so the whole man is to be given up to God without reserve. Every believer is a priest, and himself the sacrifice. The Christian is "not his own, but "he is bought with a price," and hence both his body and spirit belong to God. The vicious appetites and affections of his body are all to be consumed in the fire of divine love. His body, with all its members, including by a synecdoche his soul with all its faculties, is to be devoted to God, and used to his glory only. This our baptismal vow requires and our reason sanctions, for God's service is a "reasonable service." An occasional act of homage will not prove us to be the servants of God. His service will not admit of a partial self-devotion to it; but it must be universal and constant. The servants of God are well acquainted with the peremptory and comprehensive requisitions of his service; and therefore when the devil, the world, and the flesh, make their imperious claim to a portion of our time or talents, we must reply, as Moses did to the reluctant and partial permission which Pharaoh granted to the Israelites, when they demanded leave to go and serve the Lord their God: "We will go with "our young and with our old, with our sons and "with our daughters, with our flocks and with "our herds will we go:" "there shall not an "hoof be left behind. For thereof must we take "to serve the Lord our God: and we know not "wherewith we must serve the Lord until we "come" to the place which he hath appointed.

Thus do the true servants of God, under the tuition of his grace which bringeth salvation, habitually "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," that they may "live soberly, righteously, and "godly, in this present world."

The service of God's faithful people is distinguishable from that of the hypocrite; for it is "true and laudable service." It not only differs in its totality from the partial obedience of a time-serving pharisee, but also in its cordiality from the reluctant and constrained duties of the trembling legalist or the self-confident formalist. It is voluntary and not forced. It is not the odious performance of a task imposed on a slave; but it is the willing and cheerful compliance of a child who loves his father, reveres his authority, is convinced both of the equity and propriety of all his commands, and who is assured that his father's will is not only dictated by consummate wisdom, but is also under the control of the tenderest love. It is "true;" for it is the service of the heart. This cheerful obedience is "laud-"able"—it is worthy of praise: not indeed on account of its high perfection, for it is debased by many flaws; but as the product of sincerity, the fruit of a Nathaniel-mind, which is an undoubted proof of a divine change produced in the soul. But in whose sight is the service of the devoted follower of God a "laudable service?" Is it such in the eyes of the world at large? Do they applaud it as reasonable and necessary, as acceptable to God and useful to men? Oh, no! "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he "shall suffer persecution." The Christian is "not of the world, therefore the world hateth "him." His "true and laudable service" is condemned and ridiculed as needless precision, as

hypocritical or enthusiastic scrupulosity. But in the sight of good men, of those "who have "obtained like precious faith," of holy angels, of the ever-blessed God, (the only judges whose opinion is of any value) "the true and laudable "service of God." is the only wisdom, and the best proof of rationality. The genuine "service "of God" is "perfect freedom;" but the service of sin, or a partial, reluctant, and heartless homage paid to God, is a conduct dictated by idiotism or insanity. O let us inquire whether we can adopt the declaration of St. Paul, and appeal to our conduct for its justification, saying, "His I am, and him I serve?"

While the people of God "do unto him true "and laudable service," they remain destitute of any meritorious claim on this account; for of God's "only gift it cometh" that they are inclined and enabled to do him service. His grace at first awakens, converts, and turns their feet into the way of peace, and then upholds them in it. "He worketh in them both to will and to do of "his good pleasure." By nature God's faithful servants are as destitute both of the inclination and ability to serve him as any other persons. They who are now "quickened," were once "dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time "past they walked according to the course of this "world, according to the prince of the power "of the air, the spirit that worketh in all the "children of disobedience." Among these the servants of God "all had their conversation in "times past, in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling "the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and "were by nature children of wrath, even as others. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great "love wherewith he loved them, hath quickened

"them together with Christ." Both the knowledge and power of performing what is acceptable in the sight of God are from himself, and are communicated by him without respect to any previous qualifications in those who receive them. "For there is" naturally "no difference" between them and others; "all having sinned and come "short of the glory of God." He enlightens their understandings, so that they discover the danger, disgrace, and folly of serving the prince of darkness, and of living to the world and the flesh. He breaks their bonds asunder, and sets their captive and enslaved souls at liberty. He shews them the excellence, honour, and reward which attend his service; he draws their affections to it, and engages them in it. In the general course of duty, and in every individual act, "of his only gift it cometh that his faith-"ful people do unto him true and laudable "service."

If we consider the many and great difficulties of God's service arising from our natural indisposition to it, and the numerous and powerful adversaries who oppose our engagement and perseverance in it, we shall plainly perceive that it is of the gift of God, wholly and exclusively, that any of us have taken his easy yoke upon us, or continue to wear it. Our natural ignorance of God and of his ways, our erroneous views of his holy requisitions, our alienation of heart from him and from whatever he has commanded, must be overcome previously to our entrance on his service. God's claim to our service is co-extensive with all our powers, and, like the law of the Medes and Persians, peremptory and unchangeable. There is, as the highest authority assures us, no possibility of serving two such opposite

masters as God and the world, Christ and Belial. The amputation of a limb and the excision of an eye are often required in compliance with his will. If any man will be his servant, he must "deny himself;" he must "take up his cross," "forsake all, and follow him" whithersoever he leads by his word and Spirit. Now, "who is "sufficient for these things?" Who by his unassisted powers is able to take a solitary step in this unbeaten path, and much less to persevere in it to the end? Yet without this we do unto God no "true and laudable service." How evident therefore is it that, throughout the whole progress of the work from its commencement to its consummation, "it cometh of God's only gift that "his faithful people do unto him true and "laudable service!" His grace is opposed by every thing within us and around us, and yet it prevails.

What powerful encouragement doth the introduction of our collect afford in offering the petition to God which follows it! For if God, of his mere grace, hath engaged us in his service; if he hath awakened, rescued, called and employed us, when we were serving other masters who are his enemies and rivals, what abundant reason have we to conclude that he will now enable us to persevere in his holy ways, and accept our imperfect endeavours to please him! There was no motive that could induce him to think of us at first when we were "enemies to him by wicked "works," except his own divine philanthropy. But his own glory is now concerned in enabling us to hold on to the end, and in "accepting us "through the Beloved!" The greater difficulties are already overcome by converting grace: and though remaining difficulties are utterly insur-

mountable by our native powers or acquired strength, yet if a comparison may be made between them and such as have been already removed, the still existing obstacles are easily removeable. But there is no gradation of facility and difficulty when God is the agent; for as nothing is impossible with him, so all things are alike easy to be accomplished by Omnipotence. With these encouraging views let us address the throne of grace, and beseech God to "grant, "that we may so faithfully serve him in this "life, that we fail not finally to obtain his hea-"venly promises, through the merits of Jesus "Christ our Lord."

The mode of expression which is adopted in this petition implies great earnestness of mind. And surely we should be fervent and importunate, when we consider the nature of the objects which we propose to ourselves. The maintenance of fidelity to our liege Lord, and the attainment of his approbation and rewards, are things of such importance, that no fervour of soul can be adequate thereto. Our own helplessness, the encouragement which arises from the divine promises, from our own past experience and that of others, should rouse all the energies of our souls in the work of supplication.

The service of God is a service for life. The terms of agreement between the Master and his servants are settled, (Rev. ii. 10,) "Be thou "faithful unto death, and I will give thee a "crown of life." Our service in order to be "faithful" must be laborious; for our work calls for the unremitted exertion of all our powers. O that we may avoid the fate of the unprofitable servant (Matt. xxv. 26. 30) who was not condemned for purloining or squandering his mas-

ter's property; for gluttony, drunkenness, or debauchery; but for the non-improvement of his time and talent. Let us be "stedfast, immove-"able, always abounding in the work of the Lord, "knowing that our labour shall not be in vain "in the Lord." Eternal life will be their portion, and theirs only, "who, by a patient con-"tinuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, "and immortality. If any man draw back, God "will have no pleasure in him." May we not be of their number "who draw back unto perdition, "but of them that believe to the saving of the "soul." "He that endureth to the end," and he only, "shall be saved." Our labour, therefore, must terminate only with our lives.

Now, when we consider the natural indisposition of our hearts both to do and to suffer the will of God—the continual and varied temptations to abandon his service to which we are exposed—the unnumbered difficulties in which our work is involved, and the sacrifices which it demands—the frequent declensions of others with whom we are acquainted, or of whom we have heard and read, from the good ways of the Lord, and our own frequent deviations from them, —we shall plainly perceive the necessity of imploring grace, "that we may so faithfully serve "God in this life, that we fail not finally to attain "his heavenly promises."

The end of obedience is salvation. Those who, through grace bestowed on them, are enabled "faithfully to serve God in this life," shall assuredly "attain his heavenly promises." All his adorable perfections are pledged for the fidelity of his promises, the accomplishment of which nothing can frustrate. But what reward

do his promises ensure to his servants? We must wait to know. We may, however, in the interval rest satisfied, that it will be worthy of God who bestows, and of Christ who purchased it; and that it will be as great as the soul is capable of receiving. "Where I am, there," says our gracious Redeemer, "shall also my "servants be." And if we are with him, it will be enough; for "in his presence is fulness of "joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for "evermore."

A connexion is stated in our collect to exist between faithfulness in our Master's service and the attainment of his promises. And the statement is strictly scriptural. But let not the believer, who is jealous of his Master's glory, fear lest our church should be found inculcating the Popish tenet of the merit of works. No: the reward promised is wholly of grace, and in no respect wages earned by our obedience. Nevertheless, it is connected with our service, and will be proportioned to it, as appears evidently from our Lord's parable of the talents.

"Good works are in no respect, in the cove-"nant of grace, the condition of acquiring a "right to justification and salvation; they are "not such a condition, either in whole or in "part; in that quality they are not necessary. "Nay, in that quality they are insupportable. "This is a truth, and a truth important in the "highest degree, which has always been acknow-"ledged and advanced by all the orthodox; but "which has not always been sufficiently urged, "and sufficiently improved, when the opportu-"nity offered. All this, however, does not "hinder good works from being in the covenant

" of grace a real condition, and a condition abso-
" lutely necessary. But it is a condition parallel
" to that which obliges a beloved child to render
" to his father, to the utmost of his power, a
" respectful and filial obedience; an obedience
" not forced, nor peevish, but paid with alacrity
" to his father, and having no mixture in it of
" any thing servile or mercenary. Works then
" are a condition of homage and acknowledg-
" ment, in the same sense and with the same
" restriction as an annual rent, with which a
" landed estate is charged, is a condition that a
" donee must fulfil, in order to retain legitimately
" that which he possesses by the sole liberality of
" the donor, and which he has not previously
" merited by his services*."

Our collect cautiously guards against any abuse which might arise from the connexion between faithfulness in God's service and the attainment of his heavenly promises, by informing us that those promises are only attainable " through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord." He purchased all for us, and bestows all upon us. " Eternal life is the *gift* of God through Jesus " Christ our Lord." God forbid that we should rob our Redeemer of the honour which is justly due unto his name!

Oh, reader, what encouragement is given to our fidelity in the delightful service of God! What has the world to propose that is comparable to the promised blessings of the Gospel? Its utmost is a momentary pleasure followed by

* See a work of Ph. Naude Le Père, Professor of Mathematics, and Fellow of the Royal Society at Berlin, 1736: where the reader will find much more excellent observation on the same subject.

eternal regret. Even in the work of obedience there is peace, and in keeping God's commandments there is a present great reward. But what is laid up in heaven for them that love him, none can tell.

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity: and that we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou dost command, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

So soon as the good seed was sown in the field of the world the enemy came and sowed tares, according to our Lord's representation in his beautiful parable on the subject. Satan has been diligently employed in disseminating "false doc-" trine, heresy, and schism," ever since the Gospel began to be preached. Various infernal means have been devised and tried for the purpose of rendering the Gospel of no effect; and, alas! in many instances, with fatal success. Among the various heretical opinions which have prevailed in the church, one has run parallel with Christianity—it commenced with its birth, and has grown with its growth. The error alluded to is the merit of human works. By this fundamental heresy we find that the Galatian church was in danger of being misled soon after its plantation, as appears by St. Paul's Epistle addressed to them, wherein he combats the notions which some judaizing teachers had propagated, with a warmth of spirit which nothing but the hostility of those notions to the very existence of Christianity could have justified. Towards the close of his epistle he sums up the

doctrine of orthodoxy in a few words:—"In "Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any "thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which "worketh by love." With respect to the dispensation of the Gospel, there is no availableness in merely external circumstances to the promotion of salvation; the "one thing needful" is "faith which worketh by love." No works of righteousness, ceremonial or moral, afford any meritorious ground of hope to a lost sinner. The Jew and Gentile, in this respect, are on a level. The former has no basis for confidence but Christ Jesus; the latter is no more disqualified than the former for deriving salvation from him. A dependence on any thing but him in the pursuit of salvation must be fatal. That faith which embraces him as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, and relies exclusively on his merit, and which always evidences itself by its proper fruits, is the essential mean of human salvation, without which no man can be justified in the sight of God. And therefore the Apostle says, in another place, "We who are Jews by nature, and "not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a "man is not justified by the works of the law, "but by the faith of Jesus Christ—even we have "believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be jus-"tified by the faith of Christ, and not by the "works of the law: for by the works of the law "shall no flesh be justified."

For an increase of this justifying "faith," and of its inseparable concomitants "hope and "charity," the members of our church, who are in tenderness of judgment supposed to be already partakers of these graces, are taught to pray, in our collect for this day. It consists of two petitions; the former imploring a growth of the

three cardinal branches of the Christian character; and the latter, ability for the practical exercise of these virtues.

A review of the first petition will lead us to contemplate—the nature and distinct offices of these graces;—their order and mutual connexion with each other;—the fountain from which they are all derived;—and the propriety of our prayer for their increase.

By the word "FAITH," as used in our collect, we are to understand that principle in the soul to which salvation is so annexed by the word of God, that without it no one can be saved, and with it no one can perish. "He that believeth, "and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that "believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16. It is carefully to be distinguished from the faith of miracles, a merely historical assent to divine truth, or a temporary belief of it. The faith of miracles, whether active or passive, whether it respected the communication or reception of an extraordinary divine agency, had no regard whatever to the personal salvation either of its instrument or recipient. (See Matt. vii. 22; ix. 2; xvii. 20; John xi. 40; 1 Cor. xiii. 2.) An historical assent is given by thousands to divine truth, of which they never entertain a doubt, who are, nevertheless, utter strangers to "the "faith of God's elect." Such was the faith of Agrippa, who, though he believed the prophets, was only "almost persuaded to be a Christian." Acts xxvi. 28. And such is the faith of which St. James speaks as common to many persons with the devils "who believe and tremble." James ii. 19. The faith of devils, indeed, is a more influential principle than that of many who acquiesce in the truth of the Scriptures. There

is also a temporary faith which approaches nearer to the true principle of godliness than either of the former, but which is nevertheless essentially deficient. Of this kind is the effect produced on stony-ground hearers of the Gospel. (Matt. xiii. 20, 21.) Such also was the faith of those who, being struck with the doctrine of the Baptist, "were willing for a time to rejoice in his "light." John v. 35. And of the same kind is the faith of those who are mentioned (Hebrews vi. 4–6) as "being enlightened, tasting of the "heavenly gift, and being made partakers of the "Holy Ghost; as tasting the good word of God, "and the powers of the world to come, and yet "falling away." From these a saving faith essentially differs, both in its nature and effects, as we shall presently see more fully. In its nature, it is "the substance of things hoped for, "and the evidence of things not seen." In its effects, it "worketh by love," and is productive of salvation: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, "and thou shalt be saved." Acts xvi. 31.

The faith of which our collect speaks is a habit wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, through the ministry of his word and sacraments, whereby the word of God, the Gospel which it reveals, and the promises which it contains, are understood, embraced, and applied to the heart for the purpose of justification, sanctification, and eternal salvation. It is not a temporary act of the mind, but the temper, disposition, and tendency of the heart. It is the nature of the new-born soul to trust in Christ, as it is the nature of ivy to embrace the wall or tree near to which it grows, and with which it comes in contact. The object of faith is the whole word of God, exclusively and inclusively;

and particularly the Gospel of Christ, or Christ himself. The act of faith is three-fold; it comprehends knowledge, approbation, and reliance. The understanding receives the truth, the heart approves it and depends on it. The necessity and suitability of the saving truth which the Gospel discloses, are discerned by the genuine believer. He perceives that it is the only way of salvation, and that it is admirably adapted by divine wisdom and grace to his state as a guilty, helpless, and undone sinner. As therefore the corresponding internal superficies of any material substance which has been suddenly split without any mutilation of the parts, agree nicely with each other in a manner which no workman's tool could produce; so does the provision of the Gospel exactly meet the wants of a convinced sinner. The reciprocal correspondence which exists between these two things proves the divinity of the Gospel-plan, and produces in the soul a cordial acquiescence in it. The believer therefore embraces Christ with ardent affection as the sole foundation of human hope, and, renouncing his own righteousness, fixes his confidence exclusively on the atonement and righteousness of Jesus.

The principal office of faith is the justification of the soul before God. And this it doth, not meritoriously or by virtue of its own excellence, but instrumentally, as it embraces and applies that which is the sole meritorious cause of our acceptance with God, the righteousness of Christ. "For by him all who believe are justi-"fied from all things, from which they could not "be justified by the law of Moses," whether ceremonial or moral. But, though this is the chief office of faith, yet at the same time it

becomes the parent of "hope and charity," and thus is itself "justified by works," as St. James has fully declared.

HOPE is the necessary effect of faith. It is an expectation of salvation founded on the promises of God and the merits of the divine Mediator. It differs from faith as the effect from the cause. Faith receives the testimony of God that Christ has atoned for all sin and fulfilled all righteousness on the behalf of transgressors, and that, in consequence of this divine atonement and righteousness, "God can be just and the "justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." On this testimony and its reception into the heart as "faithful and worthy of all acceptation," hope builds her fabric of glorious expectation that all the fruits of Christ's death and passion shall finally and in due succession be produced. The object of faith in this case is the divine promise on which it rests. The object of hope is the thing promised which it expects. "We "through the Spirit wait for the hope of righ-"teousness by faith." Gal. v. 5. The blessings about which hope is occupied are the result of our Redeemer's obedience unto death. In this faith trusts; and hereby an expectation of receiving "the hope of righteousness" is formed within the bosom: while both faith and hope owe their existence and activity to the agency of the divine Spirit.

The office of hope is the consolation of the believing mind both in life and death, the progressive purification of the heart from all carnal and worldly lusts, and its confirmation in its course both of active and passive obedience to the will of God. Christian hope is distinguishable from the hope both of the worldling and

the hypocrite, by the excellency of its object, the stability of its foundation, and the sanctifying effect of its exercise. It is "the hope of "salvation;" it is "an anchor of the soul both "sure and stedfast." And "he that hath this "hope in him purifieth himself even as Christ "is pure." May "the God of hope fill" both the writer and reader of these pages "with all "joy and peace in believing, that they may "abound in hope through the power of the "Holy Ghost."

CHARITY is the supreme love of God as the chief good—as possessed of all perfection in himself intrinsically, and as being extrinsically the fountain of all happiness to us. It is the necessary product of faith and hope, and shews itself by an uniform and unlimited obedience to all God's commandments. It is the sum of the commandments, and the end of the moral law. Its office is to glorify God, to prove before men the sincerity of our faith, and to qualify us both for the service and enjoyment of God. As a former collect* afforded us an opportunity of discussing this branch of our present subject, we shall not now enlarge on it.

We proceed, therefore, to consider the order of these cardinal graces, which is a matter of high importance. In this the author of our collect hath not arbitrarily followed the dictate of his own imagination, but was directed and sanctioned by an inspired Apostle. (1 Cor. xiii. 13.) Faith justly takes the precedence on account of its office and priority of action. For it acts alone and independently of hope and charity in its instrumentality as the mean of reconciliation with

* See the Collect for Quinquagesima Sunday.

God, as it is the hand that lays hold on Christ for pardon and justification. After faith follows hope, its first-born child; and charity brings up the rear of the lovely train. We cannot hope for promised blessings until we believe in Jesus Christ, and receive the promises which are "in "him yea and in him amen." Nor can we love God, until, by believing in Jesus Christ and hoping for good through him, we behold God as reconciled to us, and as become to us the author of eternal salvation. Yet charity, though the last in the series, is the first in dignity and importance, as the end both of faith and hope, and intended to survive both, living and acting in the heavenly state when the necessity of faith and hope shall have ceased for ever.

The indissoluble connexion of these Christian virtues is also a matter of importance. For though in the order of nature they follow each other, they are co-existent and reciprocally dependent. God hath joined them together, and no man can put them asunder. Impious, therefore, is the attempt both of the Pharisee and the Antinomian; the former of whom is an advocate for works without faith, and the latter for faith without works. "Knowest thou not, O vain "Pharisee, that love is the soul of every good "work, that love cannot exist without reconci- "liation with God, and that reconciliation with "God is exclusively the effect of our Redeemer's "righteousness which is to be embraced by "faith?" "Knowest thou not, O vain Antino- "mian professor, that faith, while it views and "embraces a crucified Redeemer, and beholds "God in him reconciled to us by the blood of "the cross, must necessarily produce gratitude "and devotedness to God, and all the effects

"which naturally flow from a conviction that "we are 'not our own, but bought with a price?' "Thy 'faith being without works is dead.' It "is a mere notional assent to truths in which "thou art uninterested, and from which thou "derivest no benefit." Without faith there can be no legitimate hope or genuine charity; and faith necessarily produces both. Yet these graces are by no means to be confounded with each other, nor is the office of the one to be attributed to the other. They are co-existent, but not co-essential. Like the senses of the human body, these spiritual senses act together in unison, but not for the same specific ends. Like light and heat, they cannot be disunited; but they produce distinct effects.

The fountain from which these graces are all derived is God. This is implied in our collect; for while we implore from him their increase, we acknowledge him to be their author. And the doctrine is scriptural. "For to us it is given, "on the behalf of Christ, to believe in "him." Phil. i. 29. The obedience of Christ is the meritorious cause of faith, which is freely given to us of God through his mediation. "It "is therefore asserted by our Lord, that no "man can come to him, except the Father draw "him." John vi. 44. And St. Paul has informed us, that "no man can say that Jesus is "the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. xii. 3. He therefore ascribes faith entirely to "the operation of God." Col. ii. 12. Now, if faith be of divine original, hope must spring from the same source; for hope is the product of faith. God is therefore called "the God of "hope;" and its exercise is ascribed to "the "power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13. A

"good hope through grace" is expressly called the gift of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; (2 Thess. ii. 16,) to which we are said to be "begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus "Christ." 1 Pet. i. 3. Charity, as the offspring of faith and hope, hath also a supernatural birth; and is therefore said to be "shed abroad in our "hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us," (Rom. v. 5,) and is classed among "the fruits of "the Spirit." Gal. v. 22. "By grace are we "saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, "it is the gift of God*." Eph. ii. 8. And this assertion is true respecting both the aggregate of redemption and every distinct part of the work.

The propriety of the petition which is offered in our collect for an increase of these cardinal graces, can be no matter of doubtful disputation to any persons who are taught of God. For as their origination is from him, so also is their progressive growth. Let us endeavour to excite our souls to fervour of spirit in prayer, by contemplating our own defects in the exercise of "faith, hope, and charity," and the importance of their increase within our souls.

The defects of our "faith" will be found, on examination, to be many and grievous. We are

* "It has often been urged, that the pronoun 'THAT' "in this passage 'cannot refer to the word FAITH as its "'antecedent, because the corresponding Greek pronoun "'is of the neuter gender, whereas the word rendered "'*faith* is feminine.' But in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, "lib. 1. c. iv. p. 54. (edit. Schneider, Lipsiæ, 1790) the "neuter pronoun ταυτα is referred to the feminine noun "ἡδονας: on which passage the following remark is made "by *Ernestus*, and repeated from him by *Zeunius*; the "well-known editor of Viger's Idioms—*Attici* LIBENTER "*post femininа neutra ponunt*, UT A MULTIS EST NOTATUM." —*Christian Observer*, vol. ix. p. 71.

indeed supposed, as members of the church, to be delivered from reigning infidelity, and to be possessed of true and saving faith. But oh! how little do we know of Christ, how feebly do we embrace the testimony of God concerning him, and how frequently is our recumbence on it interrupted! Is not the peace of our consciences often disturbed by doubts either of the divine power or mercy,—of our Lord's ability or willingness to save us? How little do we realise to ourselves invisible things, and act accordingly! And if we are thus defective in the primary grace of the Christian character, how suitable to our use is the prayer of the Apostles, "Lord, "increase our faith" (Luke xvii. 5); or that of the afflicted father, (Mark ix. 24,) "Lord, I "believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

The defects of our hope are not less affecting. For how faint at any time is our expectation of promised blessings! Indeed if our faith be weak, our hope must be proportionably weak also; as the views which we take of remote objects are indistinct when the eye is diseased. We are delivered from the paramount dominion of self-righteous and worldly hopes; but they are not extinct. And hence our prospect is cloudy and perplexed. The objects of hope are oftentimes so unsubstantiate to our minds, that, like the mariner who supposes himself after a long voyage to be approaching the wished-for port, we cannot discern whether what we behold be land or a fog-bank. And, under peculiarly discouraging circumstances, are we not ready to fear with David, notwithstanding the fidelity of the divine promises, that we shall yet perish by the hand of our enemies? "Lord, give unto us the "increase of hope, and make us to abound

" therein through the power of the Holy Ghost." 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

The defects of our love correspond with those of our faith and hope. The natural enmity of our hearts to God and his law is indeed abolished; and the supreme affection which we once felt for the world, the rival of God, is destroyed. But how short do we fall of the divine requisition to " love the Lord our God " with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength!" Where is that ardour of affection to his name, that zeal for his glory, that delight in his service, that diligent cultivation of communion with him, which his own divine perfections and our immense obligations to him challenge from us? —" Lord, may our love to thee abound ever " more and more!"

The importance of obtaining an increase of these graces is too evident to need a formal proof; for the promotion of God's glory and of our own comfort depends thereon. And it is equally clear that he who planted must water the seed sown, or that no increase can be produced.

We now proceed briefly to consider the second petition of our collect for the practical exercise of these graces. We beseech the adorable Author of faith, hope, and charity, that, in order " that " we may obtain what he promises, he would " make us to love that which he commands, " through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The end which every awakened sinner has supremely in view is salvation. " What must I " do to be saved," is with him the all-important question. This salvation is the scope of the divine promises, the mark at which they aim and the point in which they meet. Thereby

deliverance from the guilt, the power, and the existence of sin, and the possession of perfect holiness and perfect happiness, are secured to all the "followers of them who through faith and "patience inherit the promises."

We know from the word of God that the attainment of divine promises is, both exclusively and inclusively, dependent on previous sanctification; so that all sanctified persons, and none besides, shall obtain them. An aversion from that which is evil, and an attachment to that which is good, are essential pre-requisites to a participation of the inheritance with the saints in light. A conformity to the divine will is an indispensable qualification for the enjoyment of the divine presence.

Enough has been said to shew that holiness is not a pre-requisite to justification, for it "follows after it" and therefore cannot be preparatory to it. It is the effect, not the cause, of acceptance with God, which results entirely from divine mercy through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But it is absolutely necessary to salvation, if we take this term in its comprehensive sense as including glorification. For "without holiness no man shall see "the Lord." Were a criminal to be condemned, and by his confinement in a loathsome dungeon to become so diseased as to be utterly incapable of enjoying any comfort in life, and were languor and pain his constant companions; of what value would a pardon be without a subsequent restoration to health? It would only permit him to drag on a miserable existence without hope or pleasure. Were remission of sins attainable without divine grace "making us to love what "God has commanded," we should only be

exempted from the burning lake to feel everlasting torments within our own bosoms. For every unrenewed soul may adopt the words of the arch-fiend, and say, "Myself am hell*." O then may our prayers for sanctifying grace be constant and importunate, till we attain the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls!

* Milton.

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Keep, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy church, with thy perpetual mercy; and because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable for our salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our present collect is a prayer for preserving grace,—in the first petition more generally expressed,—and in the second more particularly explained. In discussing the collect we shall not, however, follow this order; but shall consider—the motive of the request which is made—the general nature of the blessing which is implored—its extent—its source, and the channel of its conveyance.

The motive of our request is the frail and helpless state of the church and of every member that belongs to her communion. "The frailty "of man without God cannot but fall." It is a motive, the force of which every conscious bosom must feel, both as it applies to us in our individual capacities and as members of the Christian church.

The salvation of lost sinners must be wholly of grace. It was grace which contrived and executed the plan of redemption; and it is grace which "opens our eyes, and turns us from dark-"ness to light, and from the power of Satan "unto God, that we may receive remission of

"sins, and an inheritance among them who are "sanctified by faith in Jesus." It is, moreover, grace that maintains the life of God in the soul of man, when it hath been kindled there; for we are "kept by the power of God, through "faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in "the last times." But of the necessity of divine grace for these momentous purposes the unconverted mind is unconscious, and therefore it cannot cordially implore it. Unawakened sinners may recite the collect of our church; but the sensibilities of their souls cannot correspond with its request. If they allow a part of the glory, arising from conversion and conservation, to be due to divine grace, they, at the same time, arrogate a part also to themselves. If the necessity of pardoning mercy be verbally admitted, the admission is clogged by meritorious conditions which the criminal is supposed to be capable of performing by his own power, for the purpose of depriving God of that glory which he claims in his word. If faith and repentance be allowed to be essential to salvation, they are perversely considered as acts of the human mind independent of divine grace. If it be granted, that a holy walk is indispensable, all that can be required is represented as being within the ability of man. The true member of our church has, however, far different views of the subject. He knows that "the frailty of man, without God, cannot but "fall,"—fall first into sin, and then into hell; that, unsupported, he must fall so as to rise no more. And therefore he joins heartily in praying, "Keep, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy "church with thy perpetual mercy:" "Keep "us evermore from all things hurtful, and lead

" us to all things profitable for our salvation,
" through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The propriety of this prayer will appear, if we consider—the difficulty of a Christian's work—and his own depravity and helplessness.

The difficulty of a Christian's work is immense, and insurmountable by the strength of fallen man. According to the common notions of Christianity it is indeed easy enough. For an assent to divine truth, exterior decency of deportment in our commerce with the world, and formality in our religious duties, constitute its aggregate. The necessity of self-renunciation, of a life of faith on the Son of God, of mortification to sin and the world, of a heavenly conversation, and of real devotedness in heart to God, is excluded from the modern system of Christianity, and represented as the reverie of a disordered understanding, if not as a juggle of designing hypocrisy. Nominal Christians consider their bodies and souls, their time and talents, as their own; and the language of their conduct is, " Who is Lord over us?" And it is therefore no wonder, if such a request as that of our collect should fail of exciting the sensibilities of their hearts.

But if the awful requisitions of Scripture, our baptismal engagements, and the preparatives for coming to the Lord's supper as they are stated in our prayer books, be duly weighed, it will appear that the Christian's work is arduous indeed. The habit of true repentance, genuine faith, and spiritual obedience, is not attended with those facilities which men in general suppose to be attached to it. " To renounce the " devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities " of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts

" of the flesh; to believe all the articles of the " Christian faith; and to keep God's holy will " and commandments, walking in the same all " the days of our lives," requires the agency of God's "special grace" to be continually exerted on the heart; as the preface prefixed to the Lord's prayer in our church-catechism informs us. " A true repentance for our former sins, " a stedfast purpose of leading a new life, a " lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, " a thankful remembrance of his death, and " charity with all men," loving our neighbours as ourselves, are things from which the corrupt heart of man is so totally abhorrent, that they can only be produced and maintained within us by God's omnipotent power.

For the depravity of human nature is so great that " in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no " good thing." Previous to conversion we have no will to that which is good; but are utterly averse from it, and prone to all evil. There is a direct contrariety between our carnal hearts and every thing that is " holy, just, and good." And even after conversion " the flesh still lusteth " against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the " things that we would." (See Rom. vii.) " Where- " fore we have no power to do good works, " pleasant and acceptable to God, without the " grace of God by Christ preventing us, that " we may have a good will, and working with " us when we have that good will." (Art. x.) Our collect doth not merely say that the frailty of man without God may peradventure fall, but that it must of necessity fall. If Adam, though created in the image of God and endued with sufficient strength for maintaining his allegiance, —if he, forewarned of his danger, and under the

awful sanctions of promises and threatenings, warm, as it were, from the lips of the great Lawgiver, and involving not only his own happiness or misery, but that of all his posterity—if he fell, "let him" among the degenerate children of Adam "that thinketh he standeth, "take heed" of trusting in his own strength for ability. The dreadful declensions of eminent saints, such as David and Peter, demonstrate the truth of the position in our collect, that "the "frailty of man, without God, cannot but fall."

We proceed to consider the general nature of the blessing which is implored. It is the conservation of the church, and of ourselves as her members, in the faith and fear of God. In praying for this blessing we consider ourselves as called out of a state of nature into a state of grace, as "justified freely through the redemption "that is in Christ Jesus," and as partially sanctified by the agency of the Holy Ghost. For unless we were brought into a state of salvation, it would be absurd to pray that we may be kept in it. But it is supposed that, as professed members of the Christian church, we are "regenerate and "made the children of God by adoption and "grace;" and as such we pray that by the same grace, through the ministry of the word and sacraments, we may be so kept from the power of inward corruption and of outward temptation, that we may not disgrace our holy profession, wound our own souls, grieve the Spirit of God, be cut off from communion with him, and lose our part in the heavenly inheritance.

The genuine believer in uttering this prayer is conscious of his own weakness, and of the danger to which he is continually exposed. He knows by painful experience which frequent

lapses have occasioned, the bias of his fallen soul to that which is evil, and its utter inability to resist temptation. He is therefore aware that his "help standeth in the name of the Lord who "made heaven and earth;" and he looks exclusively to God for support. Unlike the dry stalk of mere morality, which is stiffened for a while by its own want of vital moisture, and for a while stands a monument of its own worthlessness, he, like a living branch, furnished with leaves and fruit, is bent by the rushing breeze, and feels his need of an extraneous prop.

While, however, the humble Christian looks only to God for conservation, it is not in contempt or neglect of the appointed means that he doth so. He considers not his supplications for the aid of Omnipotence as superseding the necessity of personal effort. By no means; for he is instructed that if he is kept, it must be by the instrumentality and in the use of the means of grace. He knows that God doth not work on his people as on inanimate or irrational subjects, but that he so illuminates their minds, and influences their hearts, as to make them co-operate in their own preservation; while the whole glory is due to him from whom both the will and power to "work out their own salva-"tion with fear and trembling" proceed. This they have learned from his gracious promises. "They shall be my people, and I will be their "God. And I will give them one heart and "one way, that they may fear me for ever, for "the good of them and of their children after "them. And I will make an everlasting cove-"nant with them, that I will not turn away "from them to do them good; but I will put "my fear into their hearts, that they shall not

"depart from me." Jer. xxxii. 38–40. Thus instructed, the people of God watch as well as pray that they may be preserved from temptation, or supported under it.

Let us now contemplate the extent of the blessings for which we ask. "We beseech God "to keep us from all things hurtful, and to lead "us to all things profitable for our salvation." We are ourselves too ignorant to know what things will hurt us and what will profit us. And if we knew, we should be unable to keep ourselves from the former and to secure the latter. We are both blind and maimed, and therefore are continually liable to plunge ourselves into situations of danger from which God only can extricate us. We are constantly in want of blessings which God only can supply. We shall drink poison instead of wholesome nutriment, or starve for want of spiritual food, unless God vouchsafes to keep us and to provide for us. Let us suppose a blind man, who is also a cripple, to be engaged in a long journey through an unknown country, abounding with precipices, in which the roads are intricate, rough, and slippery, infested with robbers, murderers, and beasts of prey. Doth he not want a guide and a protector? Without a friend to lead and help him, how is he to take a single step, to find food, to distinguish the nutritious from the deleterious fruits with which the country is furnished, and to know where he may lie down in safety when he is weary,—how is he to take the right road, to avoid the precipice, or to defend himself against the lion and the bear? His destruction would be certain. This is a faint picture of the Christian pilgrim's state, independent of divine interference in his favour.

The source from which the blessing of conservation is expected to be derived, is the "perpetual mercy of God through Jesus Christ "our Lord." "God worketh" in his people both "to will and to do of his good pleasure." Indeed, the perseverance of the penitent soul in faith and holiness is as much an act of grace as his vocation or justification! "Perpetual mercy" must attend us all the days of our lives, or we shall assuredly fall short of eternal bliss—mercy to pardon the constant aberrations of our hearts, their perverse declensions from the path of duty; —and mercy to renew our souls in holiness, to keep us from final ruin, and to fit us for the eternal inheritance. A believer is, daily, hourly, momentarily, a pensioner on the "perpetual "mercy" of God. He is a wonder to himself, not only while he reflects on that compassion which was shewn him in his conversion, but also when he contemplates the inexhaustible patience which hath been exercised towards him. The recollection of unwearied attention and kindness, shewn by a fond mother to her child during the years of infancy, is pleasing to the mind of every one who, grown to maturity, has a spark of gratitude in his nature. But how faint an image doth this afford of that unremitted compassion which conducts a sinner to glory!

We shall conclude by observing, that a cordial use of our present collect is a characteristic of a real Christian. None but a genuine believer can use it in sincerity, and every such person will heartily join in it. It is, in substance, the daily prayer of the whole church. The unawakened mind is neither conscious of its danger nor of its own weakness. If duty be proposed, it deems itself to be equal to the task. It

discerns nothing of the difficulties which attend the life of faith. Nominal Christians can therefore live from day to day without any aspirations after retrospective pardon, or prospective strength. But the real Christian feels the burthen of guilt which he daily contracts, perceives his danger, knows his own debility, and therefore cries, "Lord, help me." When he rises in the morning, engages in his worldly business, or enters on religious duty, in short, "at all "times and in all places," he perceives the propriety of using our admirable collect.

Let the reader make this collect, then, a test of his sincerity. You profess to be a member of our church; but do your sensibilities accord with those of her children? Are you a child of grace, a dependent on "perpetual mercy?"

Let it be observed, finally, for the comfort of the godly, that they here implore what God has promised to bestow. "The Lord upholdeth the "righteous." "Though he fall, he shall not be "utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth "him with his hand." Psal. xxxvii. 17. 24. "I the Lord do keep my vineyard: I will water "it every moment: I will keep it night and "day." Isa. xxvii. 3. "Fear thou not, for I "am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy "God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help "thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right "hand of my righteousness." Isa. xli. 10. "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, "and keep you from evil." 2 Thess. iii. 3. "He is able to keep you from falling, and to "present you faultless before the presence of "his glory with exceeding joy." Jude 24. "Wherefore let them that suffer, according to

"the will of God, commit the keeping of their "souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful "Creator." 1 Pet. iv. 19. Happy is the man who can say with St. Paul, "I know whom I "have believed; and am persuaded, that he is "able to keep that which I have committed unto "him against that day." 2 Tim. i, 12.

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O Lord, we beseech thee, let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy church: and because it cannot continue in safety without thy succour, preserve it evermore by thy help and goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OUR present collect bears a strong resemblance of that which immediately precedes it; the request is nearly the same, and is urged by the same consideration expressed in different words. This repetition, however, cannot be condemned, when the importance of the blessing which is implored, and the uninterrupted existence of the cause which renders it necessary, are considered; especially as the petitions are designed for use on different days. But, indeed, we should have been justified in a renewal of our request at the same season of worship, by the example of our Lord, who in his agony prayed thrice, saying the same words.

As we discussed the preceding collect with a view to the members of the church in their individual capacity, we shall contemplate the present chiefly with a view to the church in its collective capacity; though, as generals include particulars, what is confessed and implored on behalf of the church may be applied to all the constituent parts of her community. Our collect consists of—a general petition for the purification

and defence of the Catholic church—and a more particular request for her constant preservation, urged by the consideration of her continual exposure to danger without divine succour.

In reviewing the wants of the church, and her prayers for purification and defence, we shall not take so wide a scope as Christendom presents to us; but we shall chiefly confine our attention to that branch of the Catholic church for whose use our collect is designed, with which we are most intimately acquainted, and for which we are most affectionately concerned.

That the church of England is, in many respects, one of the most important branches of the sacred tree which God has planted in the earth, and whose branches have spread, with more or less luxuriance of growth, over its four quarters, will not, it is presumed, be denied by the readers of these pages. She appears to their author to be highly favoured of God, and to be preserved for eminent service, as a repository of sound doctrine, and the instrument of diffusing it over the rest of the world. The revival of genuine godliness which she has lately experienced, the providential favours which have been shewn her during the present awful crisis in the history of nations, the extent of communication with other parts of the world which national commerce affords her, the zeal which begins to appear in her sons, and the national opulence which promises them ability for the execution of their pious schemes, these are circumstances which seem to justify the expectation which has been expressed.

That the church of England is one of the most pure, as well as one of the most important branches of the Catholic church, will also be

admitted by the generality of those into whose hands these pages will fall. Her doctrine and her form of church-government, derived from the fountain head, certainly approximate very near to the divine model after which they are constructed; as hath been shewn by innumerable advocates who have stood forward in her defence against her enemies*.

It must however be acknowledged (and her children will acknowledge it with deep regret) that the prayer of our collect on her behalf is by no means unnecessary. She greatly needs purification; for her garments have contracted many a foul stain, from which the "continual "pity" of her Lord is required to cleanse her. While we avow our belief that in no part of the Catholic church is to be found more purity of doctrine, or more genuine piety, and that no Christian community of the same extent is less corrupt, we have to survey and to lament much imperfection. This our church herself confesses, for it is not only implied in our present collect, but it is explicitly avowed in the preface to her Commination service, where the relaxation of primitive discipline and its fatal consequences are deplored, and the best remedy which the times will admit is recommended and adopted. To this evidence we may add that the more zealous of her prelates have long lamented, in their pastoral addresses to their clergy, an awful departure in many cases from purity of doctrine in the pulpit, and from purity of manners in the world†. And although this defection is pre-

* See particularly Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity.

† See Secker's, Horne's, Horsley's, and Obeirne's charges.

vented from producing the same epidemic influence which, in a church not guarded as ours is by an orthodox and spiritual liturgy, articles, and homilies, it must produce; it is, nevertheless, too common in its prevalence to be unobserved, and too mischievous in its consequences to be undeplored.

But it is not only in the clerical body that purification is needed; it is needful also, and to a much greater extent, among the laity who compose the mass of our national church. Tares are plentifully mixed with the wheat in our ecclesiastical field. Our reformers, in imitation of their divine master, sowed good seed; but the enemy, taking advantage of the ignorance, sloth, and carelessness of many among their successors who call themselves the servants of the householder, hath sowed tares among us with an unsparing hand. Hence "false doctrine, heresy, "and schism; hardness of heart, and contempt "of God's word and commandments," (not to mention the most glaring and shocking immoralities,) debase our national church by appearing among those who profess to be her members. And though it is to be hoped that, at the present era, real godliness, consisting in purity both of doctrine and practice, is reviving among us, yet it is also to be feared, or rather it cannot be disputed, that infidelity and profligacy are likewise increasing. The number of genuine churchmen is daily augmented; but those who had only the form of godliness, more freely than heretofore throw aside the mask which they had assumed, and enlist themselves openly under the banner of scepticism and licentiousness.

An inquiry may be proposed concerning the manner in which we may expect that our prayer

for the purification of the church will be answered. Its evils may to some persons appear too inveterate for a cure. But let them remember that nothing is impossible with God. He who was the Author of our reformation from the errors of Popery, can also purge out the leaven of evil which has now spread itself through the ecclesiastic lump. It is not for us to pry too curiously into the methods of divine procedure, nor to prescribe to infinite Wisdom the plan it should pursue. It is enough for the support of our faith and the encouragement of our souls in prayer, to know that infinite Wisdom and Power, influenced by "continual pity," can be at no loss for the means of effecting its gracious purposes. In the present case, however, the difficulty is not insurmountable even to our shallow reason. For as the foundation of purity is laid in our liturgy, articles, and homilies; as the platform of our establishment needs no material amendment; and as a considerable and increasing leaven of genuine evangelical piety is to be found among the ministers and members of our church; all that is necessary for her purification is a further effusion of the Spirit of grace on the clergy and people, awakening them from their lethargy, and converting them to the knowledge and service of God. If God vouchsafe to cause his Gospel to be more generally proclaimed, and to accompany it with the demonstration of his Spirit, his church among us will indeed be progressively cleansed till it shall become the glory of all lands, the joy of the whole earth. And (blessed be his name!) we are not without some favourable symptoms, which encourage our hopes and animate our supplications.

But our church needs defence as well as puri-

fication by God's continual pity. Our present privileges arising from our connexion with her, are invaluable, and worthy of the most fervent prayers for their continuance. And their continuance depends entirely on the continued pity of our Lord. For we have by our sins, private and national, long forfeited every advantage, spiritual and temporal, which Britain's bountiful Lord has bestowed on us. The extinction of those advantages is threatened both by foes without and foes within our citadel; and nothing but the "continual pity" of our merciful Lord hath hitherto prolonged them, or can yet preserve them.

The external dangers of our Zion from its open assailants will not be deemed small by those, who have duly considered the origin of the recent confusion which overspread nearly all Europe, and threatened the destruction of every throne and every altar. Those persons who have read the histories of the Abbé Barruel and Professor Robison, and have thereby been led to trace effects up to their causes; who have considered the inveterate hostility of Voltaire and his associates, from whose writings the French revolution and all its horrors originated, to Christ and his religion, will be able to appreciate with some exactness the magnitude of the danger from which the "continual pity" of God hath hitherto preserved us, and will have learned to use the prayer of our collect with increased fervency of soul. The alarm which the menace of invasion by an immense host of foreign enemies during the late war, produced among us, is yet fresh in our memories; and while we contemplate what the consequences would have been, had the menace been permitted to have been carried into execution, and shudder at the phantasms of

our own imaginations, surely it becomes us to add to our grateful acknowledgments of past protection, renewed supplication that God may continue to defend his church. For though the dark cloud is in some measure dispersed, it may soon gather again and overwhelm us with destruction, unless continual pity interfere on our behalf.

But it is not only from external violence that we are exposed to danger; for the perils of our church within are neither few nor small. It was not many years ago declared by a celebrated heresiarch, in a letter addressed to the Right Hon. William Pitt, that a train of gunpowder was laid for the overthrow of our ecclesiastical government, and the explosion sure and near. Hitherto, blessed be God, the threatened evil has been averted from us. But let it be remembered that Socinianism still lives and is mighty, and that all civil restrictions on its propagation have been removed. And let it also be recollected that our church is not only endangered by the hostility of those who oppose her essential doctrines, but also by that of those who, whether pretended friends or acknowledged foes, either dissent from her creed or her mode of worship. Of either class the name is Legion, for they are many. And it cannot be denied that the latter daily increase in numbers. Whether the cause be, as some have asserted, a defect of evangelical preaching in the church, or a growing love of novelty, the fact is undoubted, and calls for serious attention. May our prayers be more fervent than ever, that God would remove the cause of dissension whatever it be, and reunite the subjects of this empire in that mode of scriptural and apostolic worship which is established by law among us.

That neither the church to which we belong, nor our own souls, "can continue in safety "without divine succour," hath, it is presumed, been made apparent by this and the preceding Essays. And oh! that they may be the means of exciting every reader to greater fervency in prayer, that both the church and our own souls "may be preserved evermore by God's help and "goodness." His help is essential to our preservation; and that help must be the result of divine goodness, to which only we can appeal with any hope of success. As a church, and as individuals, we can urge no plea that is not derived from the mere bounty of our God.

Should the present Essay be censured for the exposure which it makes of the pollution and danger of our ecclesiastical body, its vindication is easy. It will be sufficient to observe that an attempt at concealment is folly, either when the fact is glaring, or when a disclosure is calculated to be productive of benefit. A physician is surely blameless for endeavouring to rouse a lethargic patient to the use of the means prescribed, by such information of his danger as is necessary to effect it. Charity consists not in silence but in faithful admonition, when silence may prove fatal, and fidelity be conducive to salvation. While Philistines encompass us round about, and discord prevails within, shall we sleep on and take our rest? God forbid! Rather let us rise and pray that God would "cleanse and defend his church." Let every standard-bearer in the holy army erect the ensign of the cross, and call aloud to all within the reach of his voice to rally round it. Let us preach the word, and be instant in season and out of season in publishing the Gospel of peace. It is not by clamorous and virulent abuse

of her enemies that the church will be benefited, but by increased zeal and fidelity in her pastors. If we would truly subserve her interests, it must be done by out-preaching, out-praying, and out-living those who oppose her. The purity of our doctrine, the holiness of our lives, and the disinterestedness of our conduct, must attract the attention, gain the affections, and secure the esteem of our people. And if at any time the unhallowed weapons of furious bigotry are employed against us, let us not return railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, and commit ourselves to him that judgeth righteously.

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lord, we pray thee, that thy grace may always prevent and follow us; and make us continually to be given to all good works, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It has frequently been observed in the course of these Essays, that holiness and happiness are inseparably connected. This is one of those truths which are every where deducible from the dogmas of Scripture and from the forms of our church. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way," and they only, who walk in the law of the Lord. "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies; and "that seek him with the whole heart. They "also do no iniquity, they walk in his ways." But while a full conviction of this occupies the bosom of every Christian believer, he is painfully conscious of his own defects, and therefore is earnest in supplication for an universal conformity, both of heart and life, to the will of God. "O that my ways were directed to keep "thy statutes!" For he is thoroughly persuaded that the advantages to be derived from universal holiness are neither few nor small, while he feels his own inability to maintain it. "Then shall "I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto "all thy commandments. I will praise thee "with uprightness of heart, when I shall have "learned thy righteous judgments. I will keep "thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly." Psal. cxix. 1–8.

Feelings similar to those of the Psalmist arise

in the bosom of every one who is a true member of the New Testament church, in a greater or less degree of energy according to the degree of knowledge and of faith which he has obtained. He perceives it to be his privilege to cultivate holiness and to practise good works; and he is earnestly desirous of a conformity to all the will of God. But he is aware of his own impotency, and the frailty of his own resolutions when assailed by temptation. He has frequently found by mournful experience, that they resemble a singed thread which the slightest touch will snap asunder. And he knows that his future vows must prove equally futile, by their infraction involve him in new guilt, and leave him disappointed of his desired scope, unless he derives continual help from God. The language of our collect for this day is therefore adapted to the sensibilities of his heart; and he concurs earnestly with the congregation in crying, "Lord, we "pray thee, that thy grace may always prevent "and follow us; and make us continually to be "given to all good works, through Jesus Christ "our Lord."

In this collect we implore three important blessings—that the grace of God may always prevent us—that it may always follow us—and that, hereby, it may make us continually to be given to all good works.

We pray that divine grace may always prevent us—that it may *precede* us as our guide, making our way easy; that it may *anticipate* both our wants and God's commandments, by supplying the former, and furnishing us with a love to the latter and power to fulfil them; that it may *preoccupy* our affections so as to leave no room for the world, the flesh and the devil; and that it

may *hinder*, *obviate*, and *obstruct* us in every deviation from the path of rectitude, the way of peace. Now the grace of God must "prevent," or go before us, for the all-important purposes—of justifying our persons,—and of sanctifying our hearts.

It must precede all acceptable service on our parts by the justification of our persons in the sight of God. For until we are brought into a justified state, or constituted righteous before God, nothing which we do can be acceptable to him or obtain his approbation. And justification is purely an act of divine grace, anticipating all obedience on the part of the recipient; for we are "justified freely by his grace through "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. I am "the vine," saith our blessed Lord, "ye are the "branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, "the same bringeth forth much fruit; for with-"out me," previous to union with me by faith, "ye can do nothing," nothing that can further your salvation or recommend you to God. The Apostle therefore has asserted, (Rom. viii. 8,) that "they who are in the flesh," as contra-distinguished from those "who are in Christ Jesus," to whom "there is no condemnation," (ver. 1,) "cannot please God." For "without faith" in Christ, which is the sole instrument of justification, "it is impossible to please him." Heb. xi. 6. With this scriptural statement the articles of our church clearly and fully accord. For the twelfth article declares that "good works are the "fruits of faith, and follow after justification;" and the thirteenth informs us, that "works done "before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration "of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch "as they spring not of faith in Jesu Christ,

"neither do they make men meet to receive "grace, or deserve grace of congruity; yea, "rather, for that they are not done as God hath "willed and commanded them to be done, we "doubt not but they have the nature of sin." The first acts, then, of divine grace on the heart of a sinner must be a conviction of sin, wrenching him from the covenant of works and his perverse adherence to it for acceptance with God; and the communication of power to believe in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ for pardon and life. And this faith brings the previously condemned sinner into a state of justification, qualifies him for the performance of good works, and is itself the principle of all subsequent obedience. The acts of an outlaw are invalid. The attempts of a capital convict at self-justification are preposterous.

It appears from these remarks, that our first concern in the great business of salvation respects the acceptance of our persons before God; and that this acceptance must be the result of divine grace, through faith on our part; which faith is to be considered independently of all good wrought in us or done by us. Reader, is this our first concern? Have we determined the important point, or are we endeavouring to determine it, whether we are accepted by God or not? Are we conscious of those sensibilities which always accompany justification, namely, entire self-renunciation, and an exclusive reliance on the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

This grace must "*always* prevent us." In every act and moment of our lives it must go before us. For the sin of our nature, and the sins of our hearts and lives, continually incur renewed guilt, and would bring us afresh into

condemnation, did not divine grace continually pardon and accept us. We cannot on our first acceptance say, "Lord, pardon the past, and I "will offend no more." But the prayer which self-knowledge dictates is this,—"Lord, pardon "past and present guilt, as an earnest of future "forgiveness and of final acceptance in the "Beloved."

But divine grace must, moreover, prevent us for the purpose of sanctifying our hearts. The performance of good works, and the attainment of future happiness, require previous sanctification; for, by nature, we are utterly disqualified both for the former and the latter. Now, in the work of sanctification divine grace must prevent us, both generally and particularly; with respect both to a radical renewal of our nature, and the production of every holy fruit, the ability to perform every specific act of duty. For "the "condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is "such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, "by his own natural strength and good works, "to faith, and calling upon God. Wherefore "we have no power to do good works, pleasant "and acceptable to God, without the grace of "God by Christ preventing us that we may "have a good will, and working with us when "we have that good will." We are by nature ignorant, perverse, rebellious; yea, "the carnal "mind is enmity against God; it is not subject "to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Now regeneration, in consequence of which the carnal mind is superseded by a holy temper and disposition, is exclusively the work of God. And even after that regenerating grace has been conferred on us, preventing grace must always precede us for the purpose of exciting to action

the inherent spark of life which hath been communicated. There is life in the seed which is sown; but the influence of the sun and rain is necessary to produce vegetation.

Let us inquire whether we are partakers of preventing grace in the general acceptation of the term. Are we regenerate persons? And are we conscious of a further need of preventing grace to enable us for a due performance of every holy duty? The answer to the latter question will decide the former.

We proceed to consider the second branch of our prayer,—that the "grace of God may always "follow us." Were it only to justify us from the guilt of past offences, and to sanctify us only so far as to restore us to an equipoise between sin and holiness, placing us where Adam stood at his creation, our destruction would be as certain as if nothing at all had been done for us. For if Adam fell, when the world and the things of it were in a state far less productive of danger than they now are, and when the old serpent was an inexperienced tempter, what reason have we to think that we should be able to stand? Divine grace must accompany us throughout the whole period of our preparation for heaven, and continually exert its influence upon us. This the awakened sinner feels, and therefore cordially unites with the church in the second petition of her collect.

But for what purpose is the grace of God implored in this second petition? We ask that it may be our companion through life, that it may never forsake us, but persevere in its influence on us till its aim is attained. It must "follow "us" for the purpose of pardoning the imperfection which is attached to every act in which

we engage. We never perform a duty, after which we are under no necessity of imploring forgiveness. For "all we (although baptized "and born again in Christ) yet offend in many "things; and if we say we have no sin, we "deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (Art. xv.) The grace of God must, moreover, follow us for the purpose of keeping the imparted principle of holiness alive, of strengthening and confirming it, and of exciting it to unremitted activity. This principle, as resident in the heart of man, is like a spark struck upon the bosom of the watery deep. The human soul is not, like tinder, adapted to receive, cherish, and spread it; but, like water opposed to fire, it is totally hostile to its existence. Omnipotence, therefore, and that incessantly exerted, is necessary to its preservation and increase. To this we may add, that the grace of God is necessary to follow us even to the tribunal of God, that our persons and services may be accepted in the great day. God is *merciful* in rewarding any man according to his works. (Psal. lxii. 12.) For no work of man can merit reward, but rather punishment. Grace must therefore bring forth the top-stone of human welfare, as well as lay its foundation.

We proceed to pray, in the third place, that "the grace of God may make us continually to "be given to all good works." In this petition we may consider—to what the Christian believer desires to be devoted—what is the nature of the devotedness after which he pants—from whence he expects it—and the reason why he is so solicitous to obtain it.

Every true believer desires to be "given," that is, devoted to the practice of "all good "works." Now, it is to be observed, that by

"good works" we are to understand holy thoughts and words as well as actions. For mental prayer, in which no corporeal member is employed, and godly conversation, in which no other member than the tongue is engaged, are good works. Christian duty comprehends the heart as well as the life; and claims the heart in the first place, as previously indispensable to the consecration of the life.

Any work, in order to be denominated good, must be good in its motive, in its rule, and in its end. The motive of every good work is love to God, because he first loved us. So that whatever we do without a grateful regard to God, how much soever of formal rectitude it may possess, is essentially evil. The rule of good works is the word of God; and whatever we do, if it be not done because God has commanded it, is materially defective. If we go no further than our fallen reason requires, the fashion of the world will justify, or even than mere morality dictates, we fall short of performing any good works. The end proposed by good works, and which constitutes the reason why Christian believers are so solicitous to obtain grace that they may be given to them, is manifold. Their primary and ultimate object, the alpha and omega proposed in them, is the glory of God. The mediate objects are our own advantage and the profit of our fellow-creatures. The glory of God must be paramount in our bosoms. The illustration of his divine character, of his mercy, power, holiness, and truth, by our spirit and conduct, must be the governing scope of our souls. The planets roll in their several orbits for the purpose of reflecting the radiance which they receive from the sun, and

without which they would be opaque and useless. In a secondary view self-advantage is proposed by the awakened mind in its desire after devotedness to good works. For although a sinner is "justified by faith only, without the works of "the law," yet the sincerity of that faith must be justified by good works both to ourselves and others, as St. James has declared; and thereby we are to demonstrate that we have not "received "the grace of God in vain." That we are passed from death unto life, must appear by the fruits which we produce. A creed and a profession will leave us comfortless without a corresponding practice. The practice of good works is necessary to promote our present happiness, and to increase in our souls a meetness for heaven. The good works of the saints are also important to the church of God. For they silence the objections of her adversaries, while they prove that piety is not hypocrisy, and that faith in Jesus is not productive of licentiousness, as ignorance supposes it to be. By good works the members of the Christian community contribute to mutual edification, comfort, and fellowship; as in the human body, when every member fulfils its proper office, the welfare of the whole mechanic system is thereby promoted. But this is not all; for even the world that is without the pale of the church, is within the circle of Christian charity. The believer hath his eye on them who know not God, and are strangers to the Gospel of peace. The believer's holy walk is calculated to pour a flood of conviction on the minds of the impenitent. A godly life is an awakening, comforting, and instructive sermon, addressed to all who are within the compass of its voice. Thus, among

other methods, "wisdom crieth without, she "uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in "the chief places of concourse, in the openings "of the gates; in the city she uttereth her "words, saying, how long, ye simple ones, will "ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight "in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? "Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour "out my Spirit unto you, I will make known "my words unto you." Every Christian is a preacher. The silent but expressive language of his conduct, like that of the heavens, (Psal. xix. 1,) declares the glory of God to the utmost extent of his orbit. His conversation, so far as it is formed on the model of Scripture, and is given by inspiration of God, "is profitable for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for "instruction in righteousness."

If good works answer these important purposes, we need not wonder that every genuine believer is earnestly desirous of being devoted to the performance of them. His obligations are strong, and his motives are cogent.

We therefore pray that we may be "continually given to them"—that we may be incessantly and wholly addicted, dedicated, and consecrated to the practice of them. We implore grace that it may be our "meat and drink to "do the will of our Father which is in heaven;" and that "whatever we do, we may do all to "the glory of God." Some persons seem to suppose, that it is enough if a good work be performed occasionally: and satisfy themselves with a few insulated acts, instead of an uninterrupted course of godliness. But our church inculcates a different doctrine, when she instructs

us to pray "that we may be continually given "to all good works." The practice of them must be both our business and our recreation, our daily, hourly, and momentary occupation. "Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we "do," it must all be done "to the glory of "God, and in the name of our Lord Jesus "Christ, giving thanks unto God the Father "by him." At least, this must be our desire and endeavour, or we cannot cordially join in this collect of our church. If we can content ourselves with the occasional performance of what we deem to be "good works," it is evident that the motive, rule, and end of such occasional acts are wrong; for our heart, the spring of action, is not devoted to God, who says respecting his people, (Isa. xliii. 21,) "This people have "I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my "praise."

Let us inquire whether we can conscientiously use this collect of our church. Do we indeed desire to be *continually given* to all good works? This is the cordial wish of the genuine churchman. Is it your's, reader? If it be not, oh, what hypocrisy is there in your prayers!

The true member of our church is conscious that the general habit of holiness, and all its specific acts, are the effects of divine grace. He feels a languor in his will, which he wants to have removed, and a debility in his powers, which he wants to have strengthened; and therefore he prays for grace, "that he may be "continually given to all good works." Inquire, reader, if you feel thus. Is there any correspondence between your sensibilities and our collect?

We ask all these blessings "through Jesus "Christ our Lord;" a name which is increasingly precious to his disciples in proportion as they find their need of spiritual blessings, and derive increasing evidence that his merit and intercession avail for their supply.

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lord, we beseech thee, grant thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE Scripture hath given us a most alarming account of the power, subtilty, and malice of our spiritual enemies; and this account is fully verified by the experience of all those who fight under the banners of the cross. While therefore they are resolved to maintain the awful struggle with persevering energy, and for this purpose to "put on the whole armour of God" which is provided for them, they feel the necessity of imploring divine aid, without which they cannot invest themselves with that armour, nor use it to any purpose when they are invested with it. They know that, while they call all their powers into action, they must "pray always with all "prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watch "thereunto with all perseverance."

For the use of those persons who are engaged in the spiritual contest, the collect of our church used on the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity is designed. And all of them will at once perceive the propriety of such a prayer, and cordially join in it. But there are others, mixed with our congregations, who, although by baptism

they have been enlisted to "fight manfully under "Christ's banner against sin, the world, and "the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful "soldiers and servants to their lives end," yet are conscious of no warfare in which they are engaged. And the truth is, that they are engaged in none; for in spite of their baptismal profession, they are in league with "sin, the "world, and the devil." Now these persons cannot discern the propriety of such a prayer as that which our church has prescribed for their use; and though it may have passed over their lips as a matter of course, their hearts have never fervently joined in it. Earnestness of mind or the want of it, in the recital of our present collect, will serve for a criterion of character, and shew us whether we are hypocritical or sincere in our baptismal covenant.

Our present collect consists of two petitions. In the former we implore grace that we may be enabled to "withstand the temptations of the "world, the flesh, and the devil." And in the latter we seek divine aid that we may "follow "the only true God, through Jesus Christ our "Lord."

The world, the flesh, and the devil, constitute the three-fold enemy of man, which we have solemnly engaged to renounce, and which we must resist and overcome, or perish eternally through their means. Under each of these general heads an innumerable host of opponents to our salvation is included. But though they may in some respects be distinguished from each other, they are all united by a common link, and aim at one and the same object, namely, our destruction. In the class of worldly temptations are comprehended "the lusts of the

"flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of "life;" that is, the objects of these lusts. The desires both of the flesh and of the mind, an incalculable swarm, are derivatives from human corruption, here denominated "the flesh." "The "temptations of the devil" are equally in number beyond the powers of arithmetic, so vast is their diversity and multitude. Surely the Christian warrior may adopt, with a little variation, the complaint which he finds in the sixty-ninth Psalm:—"They that hate me are more than the "hairs of my head; they that would destroy me, "being my enemies, are mighty."

In the primary temptation by which our ruin was effected, the world supplied the bait, and corporeal appetite the subject; while the devil was the tempter, who exhibited the one, and excited the other to undue concupiscence. In the generality of subsequent temptations the same process takes place. Some, however, seem to be purely Satanic. For the Tempter has obtained, since the fall, such easy access to our spirits, that in many cases no outward bait is necessary to his success.

An attempt to analyse these three classes of temptations would lead us beyond the bounds of the plan proposed in these Essays. To enumerate the schemes and artifices of the devil, the corrupt propensities of the flesh, or the allurements which the world affords, is impossible, since they are almost infinitely varied. And even a list of those temptations which are most common would take up too much of the room allotted to our present subject. It will be more to edification, if we consider the necessity of withstanding temptation in every shape in which it may assault us, the impossibility of doing

it by our own wisdom or strength, and the consequent propriety of the collect which we are now reviewing.

The war in which the Christian believer is engaged is a war of extermination. He must conquer or perish. The command which Israel received in the Canaanitish war, to destroy without exception that accursed race, may be considered as addressed to the Christian warrior respecting sin. His eye must not pity nor his hand spare. He must fight under this conviction, that he must ultimately exterminate corruption, or corruption will destroy both soul and body. Without this he is not a true soldier of Christ. With a view to final victory every temptation must be withstood; for every one that succeeds weakens the power of resistance, increases the influence of corruption, and thereby throws great additional weight into the adversary's scale. Until we are earnestly desirous of withstanding every assault, and firmly resolved not to yield an inch of ground to the invading foe, whatever sacrifices or labour the opposition may cost us, we have no reason to hope that the issue of the contest will be prosperous: nay, we have no solid evidence that we are cordially engaged in it.

If we are indeed enlisted under the banner of Christ, are acquainted with the nature of the Christian warfare, and have had any experience of it, we have learned the impossibility of ensuring success, yea of gaining the smallest advantage, by our own unassisted efforts. Indeed, the first perception of danger, and the first desire of escape from ruin by an effectual opposition to sin, come from God; and every awakened person knows that they proceed from him. And

throughout every stage of the warfare it is his grace that keeps alive the animosity to evil, and that gives strength for effectual resistance. The humble and grateful language of the Psalmist is adopted by every Christian champion:—"Blessed "be the Lord my strength, who teacheth my "hands to war, and my fingers to fight."

The total impotence of man to withstand temptation will be evident, if it be considered that "the world" which he is to oppose consists of objects exactly suited to his corrupt propensities, and that he is daily and necessarily conversant with these objects, and even dependent on them for his present existence. Moreover, "the flesh" which he is to combat, is himself, and every act of opposition to it is the amputation of a limb, the excision of a right eye. "The "devil" is a spirit possessed of that knowledge, subtilty, and might, to which human ability affords no counterpoise. Man, even in his pristine state of perfection, fell a prey to his devices. And how can fallen man, weakened both in his intellectual and moral faculties, in whose bosom Satan has a powerful, watchful, and ever obedient ally—how can fallen man oppose such an enemy? To these considerations on the awful and alarming power of Satan, another may be added. For the interval which has elapsed since the fall, during which he has been constantly employed in the infernal work of temptation, has furnished him with experience, by which his original subtilty must have been greatly improved. The address of Saul to the stripling David may be adapted to every Christian soldier with relation to his enemy the devil: "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine "to fight with him: for thou art but a youth,

" and he a man of war from his youth." And nothing but the same confidence in an almighty friend which David felt, can encourage a well-founded hope of success. " The Lord," said the youthful hero, " that delivered me out of the " paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the " bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this " Philistine." " God is faithful," says the Christian combatant, " who will not suffer me to be " tempted above that I am able; but will with " the temptation also make a way to escape, that " I may be able to bear it:" And he will, moreover, " bruise Satan under my feet shortly."

The necessity of imploring " grace," in order that we may be enabled to " withstand the " temptations of the world, the flesh, and the " devil," must be apparent from the observations which have been made on the enemies with whom we have to cope. For what can all our watchfulness and strength avail in such a contest, wherein human weakness and Satanic might, mortal weariness and faintness, and hellish vigilance and perseverance, are at issue? The propriety of earnest supplication, taught us by the voice of reason, is fully sanctioned by revelation. For after that we are commanded to " resist the devil," and assured that " he will " flee from us;" we are instructed to " draw " near to God," and assured that " he will draw " near to us." James iv. 7, 8. The inference from this connexion of resistance to the enemy and prayer to God needs not to be pointed out. St. Paul, also, in a similar strain, after that he had exhorted the Ephesians to " take unto them " the whole armour of God," and had specified the several parts of that armour, concludes by calling upon them to be earnest in prayer and

supplication, (Eph. vi. 18,); Without the grace of God we "can do nothing;" but we "can do all "things through Christ who strengtheneth us."

Let the reader inquire whether he can cordially join in this petition of our collect or not. Let him ask himself, Does my heart correspond with my lips when I say, "Lord, we beseech "thee, grant thy people grace to withstand the "temptations of the world, the flesh, and the "devil?" Am I conscious that I was once in amity with these three-fold enemies of my salvation? Is that amity now converted into enmity, and the fatal league dissolved? Am I painfully sensible of a warfare within my own bosom, "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the "spirit against the flesh?" Am I resolved to withstand every temptation, whatever sacrifices such a resistance may require, knowing that I must fight or lose the crown of glory, conquer or eternally perish? Is this resistance the daily and principal business of my life, since the world is always soliciting an unlawful regard to its vanities, the flesh constantly demanding sinful compliances with its dictates, and the devil, like a roaring lion, with unremitted diligence seeking to devour me? In the progress of the warfare have I learned the total inefficacy of my own efforts? Do I know that the necessary vigilance and perseverance in it must result from the operation of divine grace on my heart, independent of which I should immediately drop "the shield "of faith," and cease to brandish "the sword of "the Spirit," turn my back in flight, for which no armour is provided; nay, again join with the enemies of God to my own certain destruction? Do I feel that, even in my best moments, my strength is weakness, and that, like Sampson

when deprived of his mystic locks, I shall easily be bound by my enemies in their hellish bonds, and so become the object of their infernal scorn and triumph, unless God give me, and continue to me, his grace, that I may be enabled to "with-"stand the temptations of the world, the flesh, "and the devil?"

An answer to these inquiries will at once determine the reader's sincerity or insincerity in the use of our collect. Unconsciousness of a warfare, a confederacy with the triune foe, indifference about success, or a reliance on personal ability, will shew the church of England professor, while he offers this petition, to be a hypocrite before God. O that there may be great searchings of heart among all those who read these pages, remembering that there can be no neutrality in the warfare between God and his three-fold rival! "The friendship of the world is enmity with "God." "They that are in the flesh cannot "please God." "If we live after the flesh, we "shall die." If we "walk according to the course "of this world, according to the prince of the "power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the "children of disobedience;" if we have "our "conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling "the desires of the flesh and of the mind;" we are evidently "the children of wrath," numbered with the enemies of God, and with them must perish.

A close connexion subsists between the two petitions of our collect. An hostility to "the "world, the flesh, and the devil," is always accompanied by an adherence to "the only true "God." Some master we all have whom we serve and obey, and there is also some object of enmity against whom we fight. The object

whom we love and follow is either the Triune Jehovah, or his trinal adversary and rival. If we love the Lord, we hate evil*. And if we love the world, cherish the flesh, and follow the devil, we hate God. "No man can serve two "masters" of opposite tempers, interests, and claims, "for either he must hate the one, and "love the other, or else he will hold to the one, "and despise the other: ye cannot serve God "and Mammon." Matt. vi. 24. It is a momentous question, to which of the twain my heart and life are devoted.

That purity of heart and mind for which we pray is a freedom from obliquity in the will and from error in the judgment. And purity of heart occupies the first place in our petition with strict propriety; because a disposition to do the will of God, as it is made known to us, is an essential pre-requisite to an accurate acquaintance with it. For "if any man will do," that is, is determined to practise "the will of God, he shall know of "the doctrine" which is announced, "whether it "be of God" or not. John vii. 17. A guileless spirit, free from reigning hypocrisy, is indispensably necessary to a genuine profession of godliness. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they," and they only, "shall see God." And oh, what reason have we to be earnest in imploring this purity of heart and mind! For when we consider the perverseness and deceitfulness of our hearts, and the darkness that prevails in our understandings; when we moreover take into the account "the "temptations of the world, the flesh, and the "devil," to which we are exposed, and by

* Psal. xcvii. 10. This passage may be taken either in an imperative or indicative sense; but the latter seems preferable.

which we are continually assaulted; we shall plainly perceive that this qualification for following God can only be derived from the grace of his holy Spirit. It is his office to give a right bias to our affections, and to "lead us "into all truth." Extraneous admixtures debase the piety of all the followers of God in the present state of imperfection; and therefore all who know themselves will be fervent in praying for increasing purity both of heart and mind. And, blessed be God, what we ask he delights to bestow. He "sits as a refiner and purifier "of silver," patiently inspecting and carrying forward to perfection the sanctification of his people. O let us seek for purity of motive, aim, and end, in our profession of following "the "only true God;" for then we shall prove that "unto the upright there ariseth light in dark-"ness," and that "the path of the just is as a "shining light which shineth more and more "unto the perfect day." For "if God gives "grace, knowledge will not stay long behind; "since it is the same spirit and principles that "purifies the heart, and clarifies the under-"standing*."

If it should appear on an inquiry, that the reader is no longer the servant of sin, but that he is become the servant of God; he will perceive the propriety of imploring grace that he may be enabled to follow "the only true God," by loving him with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, by obeying his will with alacrity and perseverance, and by devoting his all to God's service and honour. For he will be conscious that, though his conversion has been genuine,

* Dr. South.

it has been imperfect, and that, while he desires to follow the only true God without partiality and without hypocrisy, he falls very short of fulfilling his duty even to his own satisfaction. He will therefore be humbled under a sense of imperfection, and will pray earnestly for grace that he may follow more closely the object of his supreme regard.

But as some persons may have supposed themselves to be followers of "the only true God," while in reality they have no proper regard for him, let them bring their love to the test by answering the following questions. "Are your "desires fervent and affectionate after him? "Do you find a holy impatience in your spirit "till you enjoy him? Will nothing else con- "tent you but God? Can you say, that there "is none in heaven nor in earth that you desire "in comparison with him, and if the whole "world were thrown into your bosom for your "portion, you would pluck it thence, and cast "it at your feet, resolving that you will not be "put off with such trifles? Do you find a joy "springing and diffusing itself through your "hearts, when you are engaged in communion "with him—a sweet and potent delight, to "which all the pleasures of sin are but flat and "insipid? Are you jealous for the Lord of "Hosts? Are your anger and grief never so "much kindled for any wrongs that are done "unto you, as they are for the provocations "that are daily committed against the great "Majesty of Heaven? Canst thou mourn and "weep for these in secret, and, if thou hast "power and authority to do it, punish and "avenge them openly?—Thou mayest for thy "comfort conclude, that God hath kindled this

heavenly flame of love in thy breast—a flame "that aspires heavenwards, and will at last carry "up thy soul with it, and lodge it there, where "the desire of love shall be satisfied, the joy of "love perfected, and the zeal of love eternally "rewarded*."

That many persons who are professed members of our church do not thus follow nor desire to "follow the only true God," is too plain to be denied. For that which is the object of our chief love and confidence, whatever it be, is the god we follow. If the world, or any thing in it, be esteemed supremely by us and resorted unto for comfort, surely that is the deity we worship. If the dictates of the flesh and of the devil be complied with, voluntarily and habitually, in opposition to the commandments of the only true God, it is evident whose we are and whom we serve. O let us not deceive ourselves by supposing that external worship, the homage of the lip and of the knee, will constitute us the servants of Jehovah, if our hearts be far from him! Let us not provoke God by imploring his grace that we may "follow" him as "the only "true God," the alone object of our adoration, love, and service, while the bias of our affections is turned from him, while our will is obstinately bent on the pursuit of lying vanities, and idols have an allowed place in our hearts. Such a prayer is the highest insult to the divine Majesty; to offer it is to add hypocrisy to idolatry, and insolence to impiety.

But if the reader be indeed resolved, through grace, to "withstand the temptations of the

* Bishop Hopkins on the Ten Commandments, p. 56.

" world, the flesh, and the devil," and to " follow " the only true God," let his heart be comforted with the reflection that greater is he who is on the Christian's side than all who are against him. Let him offer our collect to the throne of grace with lively faith in the promises of God. Let him take up the language of the Psalmist, and say, " The Lord is my light and my salva- " tion, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the " strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? " Though an host should encamp against me, " my heart shall not fear; though war should " rise against me, in this will I be confident." Psal. xxvii. 1–3. " The Lord of hosts is with " us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Psal. xlvi. 11. Let us not be discouraged by the number or power of our adversaries; for if God be for us, it matters not who are against us. He is almighty to save. And if we call on him for help, he will assuredly fight for us, and we shall be made " more than conquerors through him " that hath loved us."

O then let us implore grace to " follow the " only true God," with firm affiance in his promises, with earnest desire after the knowledge and fruition of him, and with a fixed resolution to sacrifice every thing for the purpose of promoting his honour, and of attaining to his presence, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore! " As the hart," closely pursued by its enemies, " panteth after the water-brooks," so may our souls pant after God! May temptation and opposition drive us nearer to him from whom alone safety and refreshment can be derived! Not satisfied with present attainments, may we follow him with an ardent zeal, till we

have "ingulpht and plunged ourselves into God, "and are swallowed up in beatitude* !"

Our hope of success in these petitions is built on the worthiness of him in whose name we present them. We plead his merit, who as the Captain of our salvation "was led up of the "Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the "devil." He submitted to a conflict with his enemy and ours for our sake, that he might encourage us by his victory, and merit grace for our support in our contest by his sufferings. Whatever efforts the powers of darkness could make, they made against our divine Champion; —but in vain. "All the kingdoms of the world "and the glory of them" constituted the enticing bait. Even the word of God, misquoted, was introduced to aid the assault. But all was in vain. Satan was foiled, and Christ triumphed. With the Conqueror's name on our lips, let us then rest assured that we shall obtain from God the grace we implore, whereby we shall be enabled to "withstand," effectually and finally, "the temptations of the world, the flesh, and "the devil, and to follow the only true God," faithfully and perseveringly, till we are enabled to say with holy gratitude and triumph, "I have "fought a good fight, I have finished my course, "I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid "up for me a crown of righteousness, which the "Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that "day;" "when he shall come to be glorified in "his saints and to be admired in all them that "believe."

* Bishop Hopkins.

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee; mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE desires of God's people respecting a conformity to his blessed will have been uniformly the same in all ages. As the echo corresponds with the voice that produces it, so does the believing soul, when breathing its wants in prayer, with the commands of God in every age and under every outward circumstance of life. The same conviction of inability prevails in all who are "taught of God," and all look to the same source of help for the ability which is needed. What David near three thousand years ago implored for himself, we also implore in our collect for this day, and with the same convictions and sensibilities, if indeed our lips and our hearts be in unison. "Teach me," said the penitent Psalmist, "to do the thing that pleaseth "thee, for thou art my God: let thy loving Spirit "lead me forth into the land of righteousness*." "He requesteth to be fully instructed in the will "of him, whom as his Lord and his 'God' he "hath determined to serve and obey. But con-

* Psal. cxliii. 10. The Psalter version is quoted, because it more exactly corresponds with the phraseology of our collect.

"scious of his own inability to do the will of "Jehovah, even when known, he entreateth the "good Spirit of God to 'lead' him out of the "mazes of error, and the pollutions of vice, into "the pleasant land of truth and holiness*."

Our collect consists of—a humble confession—and an earnest petition.

To please God is the holy ambition of every regenerate person. This was the anxious desire and endeavour of the blessed Apostles. They laboured that, whether present or absent, they might be accepted of him. (2 Cor. v. 9.) They exhorted all their followers to "walk as chil-"dren of light, proving what is acceptable unto "the Lord." Eph. v. 8. 10. To "offer up "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through "Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. ii. 5. To endure hard-"ness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" and not to "entangle themselves with the affairs of this "life, that they might please him who had called "them to be soldiers." 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4. And not contented with exhortations, they prayed on behalf of all their disciples, that "they might "be filled with the knowledge of the divine will, "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that "they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all "pleasing, being faithful in every good work, "and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. i. 9, 10); and that God would "make them "perfect in every good work, to do his will, "working in them that which is well pleasing, "in his sight, through Jesus Christ." Heb. xiii. 21.

A regenerate soul can have no satisfaction in himself but from a humble hope that both his

* Bishop Horne.

person and his duties are pleasing to God. For the favour and smile of his heavenly Father are become his portion. Therein he makes up his happiness. Independent of divine approbation, nothing can communicate peace or pleasure to his mind. For he is convinced that "in God's "favour is life." Thus "a good man is satisfied "from himself" (Prov. xiv. 14): not from himself, or his own righteousness, as opposed to the merit of his Redeemer, but from himself, as opposed to those extrinsical and vain sources of satisfaction to which the worldling applies for consolation. "The testimony of his conscience," enlightened by the word and Spirit of God, that both his person and endeavours, though the former be sinful and the latter imperfect, are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, affords him a satisfaction, even in the deepest scenes of outward adversity, which the world can neither give nor take away. (2 Cor. i. 12.)

A general intention of pleasing God is prayed for by every regenerate person; "because the "end constitutes the specific difference in things "moral, as the shape does in things natural. But "here it behoveth us to clear up some doubts "respecting the intention of pleasing God."

"1. It is inquired, whether in every good "work the actual intention of pleasing God be "necessary throughout the whole performance "of it? E. G. a dutiful son obeys his parents "with the intention of pleasing God: I ask, "whether he commits sin in any particular "instance of duty, in case he doth not always "keep his intention actually in remembrance? I "answer; it is sufficient that the intention pre-"ceded, and is habitually retained, although it "be not thought of in every individual act: or

"many operations are produced by virtue of a "primary intention, when they are no longer "accompanied therewith. In like manner, as an "arrow is carried to its mark through the inter- "mediate space, by a single effort of the archer, "though he neither thinks of the space nor the "mark: so by one impulse of the will a good "work attains its aim, when the performer no "longer thinks of his aim or first intention. "The same might be illustrated by the simili- "tude of a traveller, who does not at every step "think of the place whither he is going, and yet "proceeds straight forwards by virtue of his first "intention."

"But here two things seem necessary to be "noticed: first, that we must labour as much as "possible to maintain the actual intention of "pleasing and glorifying God in every particular "action. Secondly, we must beware, lest, after "the first good intention, some evil and inordi- "nate intention should arise. For the latter "does not derive rectitude from the former; but "the former will be marred, corrupted, and "defiled by the latter."

"2. It is inquired, whether it be possible for "a regenerate man always to retain this habi- "tual intention of 'pleasing God in all things,' "although occasionally he may fail in many "things? I answer, that it is not only possible, "but even necessary, if he will keep faith and a "good conscience: for these do not agree, nor "have place in the same heart, together with the "design of sinning and displeasing God. There- "fore every faithful man hath a constant design "of pleasing God, and abstaining from sin, "according to that declaration of St. Paul, 'The "'good that I would, I do not; but the evil

" ' that I would not, that I do: therefore if I do
" ' that I would not, it is no more I that do it,
" ' but sin that dwelleth in me.' Rom. vii. 19.
" He that chooseth the good and refuses the evil,
" retains the design of pleasing God, although,
" under the influence of evil concupiscence, he
" may sometimes commit that which is dis-
" pleasing to God; he makes it his main business
" to please God in all things, while he studies to
" avoid every individual sin."

"3. It is inquired whether a faithful man,
" retaining this design of pleasing God, be always
" acceptable and pleasing to him, notwithstand-
" ing the forementioned failings and infirmities?
" I answer, first, that the person of a pious and
" faithful man is always pleasing and acceptable
" to God; because he is regarded, not as he is
" in himself, but as a member of Christ the head:
" ' There is no condemnation to them who are
" ' in Christ Jesus.' Rom. viii. 1. Secondly,
" The good works of believers, although imper-
" fect, are nevertheless pleasing to God, because
" they are regarded by him, as a loving Father,
" not as a rigid judge; as covered and adorned
" by the perfect obedience of Christ, not as naked
" and alone. Lastly, The failings and sins of
" believers are in themselves odious and displease
" God; and yet that displeasure affects not their
" persons. God hates sin therefore in the rege-
" nerate themselves; and for that cause, by the
" Spirit of grace, proclaims war against it; but
" the regenerate themselves are, notwithstand-
" ing, acceptable to him, and for that cause he
" confers on them his favour and his blessing*."

* Bishop Davenant's Exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians, chap. i. ver. 10.

It is supposed that all who join in the recital of our collect are possessed by this holy ambition to please God; for the use of such a prayer would be absurd in one who is destitute of it. Is the reader conscious of this desire? Is it the labour of his life to be accepted of God? Is it the supreme object of his wishes and aims? If not, let him not mock God by suffering the petition of our church, and of all her genuine members, to pass over feigned lips.

We proceed to inquire, what our church means by being "without God," when she says that "without him we are not able to please him." To be without God, implies a separation from God, both with respect to his favourable regard and the communications of his grace. All men naturally are thus separated from God. For we are "by nature children of wrath," as our catechism has taught us. We are atheists, if not in the common sense of the word, yet in one that is very awful; for we are without any intercourse with God, excluded from any participation of his spiritual influence. Now divine influence is as necessary to the life and all the vital functions of the soul, as breath is to the life and operations of the body. Man indeed, in his natural state, has a capability of loving and enjoying God; just as the body, in a paroxysm of faintness, has a capability of hearing, seeing, and smelling. But this capability must, in both cases, be restored to its proper office by extrinsic power.

In this state of separation from God, the human soul is, of necessity, destitute of those sensibilities and emotions which are requisite to a state of acceptance with God, and to the performance of any act which is pleasing to him, as the thirteenth article of our church declares in

conformity to Scripture doctrine. It has no faith in Christ for pardon and justification. It has no love to God, as a Father, Friend, and Benefactor. Now faith must "work by love" in every one who is acceptable to God. For "without "faith it is impossible to please him;" and "love "is the fulfilling of the law."

We may now see that the declaration of our collect is founded in the strictest verity. It is fully sanctioned by the word of God. (See Rom. viii. 8.) Nothing that is done by an unjustified and unsanctified person is acceptable to God. For every act so performed wants the requisites which are essential to acceptable service.

We pause for the purpose of pointing out the folly of those persons, who think that every man may so act by his own unassisted powers as to please God; and who suppose that mere morality, independent of faith in Christ, or any spiritual regard to God, will recommend them to his favour. There are many such deceived persons. They are conscious of no prevailing desire to please God, but other aims rule their hearts and conduct: and yet they fancy that they do please him. They derive no spiritual influence from him; for they feel no need of it and never seek it, and yet imagine that they are acceptable to God. O fatal delusion of the fallen mind! May God in his mercy dispel from the minds of all such dreamers the awful phantasms of error, before it be too late to derive advantage from their dispersion!

It is supposed that this declaration is fully understood and firmly believed by the members of our church; that they are all convinced that "without God they are unable to please him:" that divine instruction and aid are necessary to a

right performance of every act, and that divine mercy must be engaged in the acceptance of our imperfect services. Does the reader understand and believe it? If he do, the earnestness with which he solicits divine help will evidence his persuasion both of its truth and importance. He will unite cordially with the congregation of the faithful in praying for the teaching and influence of the Holy Ghost.

This leads us to consider the earnest petition of our collect, that God's "Spirit may in all "things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus "Christ our Lord." Herein we shall be led to consider—the blessing which we implore—and the extent of that blessing.

The blessing which we implore is the direction and governance of our hearts by God's holy Spirit.

1. We implore divine direction, that we may know the will of God, and be guided in it. Of our privileges and duties we are entirely ignorant, but so far as we are "taught of God." This is evident from the confessions and prayers both of Old and New Testament saints, from the promises of Scripture, and from the office of the Holy Ghost as it is therein described. The Scripture itself will not avail to our direction in the path of duty and peace without the illumination of that Spirit who inspired and indited it: not through any defect in the information given us in the Bible, but through a defect in our moral powers whereby we are incapacitated for discerning and using that information. The Scripture indicates our path: but we must have eyes to see it, or light will avail nothing. Now, our spiritual eyesight is so impaired by the fall,

that divine interposition is required for its restoration to its office. Do we feel our need of direction by God's holy Spirit? Do we indeed seek it? Are we determined to follow it as it is afforded to us? Are we convinced that without it we are sure to mistake our way, and can never know "how to walk and to please God?"

2. We implore divine governance. It is not enough that light be shed abroad in our understandings, unless divine "love" be also "shed "abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given "unto us." For to know is one thing, and to practise what we know is another. Temptations to err and stray from the path of duty are too strong, and the natural bias of our will to evil is too inveterate to be overcome by mere information of right and wrong. The will must be converted. God must not only give us "the "spirit of a sound mind," but also "the spirit "of love and of power." He must not only "open our eyes," but he must actually "turn "us from darkness to light, and from the power "of Satan unto himself." And this conversion of the heart, like the antecedent direction of the judgment, must be a continued and increasing act of divine grace. For we are not, in the highest state of sanctification attainable on earth, like a well-constructed watch, which, when it is wound up, will go right for a considerable length of time. But we rather resemble a ship at sea, which requires continual impulse from the wind as well as direction from the rudder, in order to maintain its course and perform its voyage to the desired port. Without the former it will be the sport of the waves and be carried away by the current, notwithstanding the skill of the most

consummate steersman. We must "live in the "Spirit," and "walk in the Spirit," if we would please God.

The extent of the blessing which we implore is very great. It is to run parallel with every step we take, or rather to be interwoven with every act we perform. For we pray, that the "holy "Spirit may IN ALL THINGS direct and rule our "hearts." There are persons who suppose (and if we may judge from the spirit and conduct of many professors, their number cannot be small) that we have nothing to do with God except in the performance of religious duties. But, in fact, every action ought to be considered as a religious duty; for "whether we eat, or drink, "or whatever we do," we are required to "do "all to the glory of God." Our whole man, body, soul, and spirit; all our thoughts, words, and actions, ought to be devoted to God. To make his love our constant motive, his word our invariable rule, and his glory in all things our end, is our privilege as well as our duty; and we can be happy only in proportion as we do so. We want the teaching and governance of the holy Spirit in order that we may perform aright the common actions of life, as well as our more holy duties. I cannot buy or sell, eat or drink, labour or rest from labour, walk in the way, or sit in the house, on right motives and for right purposes, unless my heart be "directed and "ruled" by God the Holy Ghost.

We pray that the "holy Spirit may in all "things direct and rule our hearts;" but do we mean what we say? May not the address of our Lord to the sons of Zebedee be renewed with propriety to many who recite our collect? "Ye know not what ye ask." Is there *nothing*,

in which we should wish to be exempt from the direction and governance of the Holy Ghost? Let us look into the word of God, the standard by which the direction and governance of the Spirit is conducted; and then turn our eyes inwardly on our hearts, and outwardly on our lives, for the purpose of determining the sincerity or insincerity with which we offer up this petition. Is there no sin we wish to cherish?—no duty we wish to shun?—no idol which we would shelter from destruction?—no sacrifice which we would avoid? Do we desire to live only and wholly in the service and to the glory of God? Oh, let us see that our prayers be not the sacrifice of the hypocrite, which is an abomination in the sight of God!

The genuine believer clearly perceives the propriety of this prayer, and cordially joins in it. He would in all things please God. He feels his own inability to do it. He therefore implores divine direction and governance. Let him not be discouraged. It is the office of the Holy Ghost to direct and rule the hearts of the redeemed; an office in which he delights, and which he has engaged by the covenant of grace to fulfil. The blessing which we implore, great and glorious as it is, is asked "through Jesus "Christ our Lord." It is a purchased benefit, a benefit secured to "the heirs of salvation" by the unchanging love of God the Father, the meritorious death of God the Son, and the abiding inhabitation of God the Holy Ghost.

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O almighty and most merciful God, of thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that thou wouldest have done, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SALVATION is a continued act of divine grace on the part of God its author, and the continued object of the believer's desire and expectation. Pardon and sanctification are daily needful to the peace and purity of the awakened soul, and are daily to be derived from God by faith and prayer. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Christian is found, day after day, in the posture of a supplicant, at the footstool of the mercy-seat, seeking fresh communications from the "bountiful goodness" of him who sitteth upon it.

In our present collect we implore divine protection, and state the end for which we desire it. In the petition,—we acknowledge our exposure to injury—declare our conviction of our inability to keep ourselves—of our entire dependence on God—of the importance of being preserved—and avow a good hope, through grace, that we shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.

By praying to be kept from "things that may "hurt us," we acknowledge our exposure to injury. Of this the awakened mind is conscious,

while others, like Jonah, (chap. i. 5,) are asleep on the verge of destruction, and insensible of any evil that is near them. Intoxicated with the pleasures, riches, and honours of the world, they resemble one who, in a state of inebriation, has sunk into a fatal repose, while his house is on fire and all his property consuming around him. Or, we may compare the generality of mankind to a sick patient in the delirium which fever produces, or to a wounded man after a mortification has taken place in his body. They are unconscious of their danger, and therefore employ no means for avoiding it. Let us inquire whether we be awakened to a sense of our situation—whether the feverish delirium of moral disease be removed—whether the gangrene which the inflammation of sin had produced in our souls be stopped, so that we are restored to sensibility. Know, O man, that if thou art not filled with apprehension of peril on every side, thy case is bad indeed; because thou wilt not seek for safety where it is only to be found.

But what are those "things that may hurt "us?"—Though in number incalculable, they may all be reduced under one head, SIN. We have nothing to apprehend but what arises from and by the instrumentality of sin. This parent-evil transformed angels into devils, and kindled the flames of hell. This swept the world at the deluge with the besom of destruction. This burned up the cities of the plain. This introduced death, with all its antecedents and consequents, into this once happy scene of innocence, immortality, and bliss. This torments our bodies with dire diseases, inflicting tortures on every part; and this terrifies our souls with dismal forebodings of futurity. This opens the

bottomless pit, and exposes us to the wrath of God. In short, this is the true Pandora's box, from which, on its being opened in paradise by the guilty hands of our first parents, all manner of evil issued, all the ills to which flesh is heir. If therefore we are in danger of contracting guilt and pollution by the commission of sin, our danger is imminent indeed. Let the conscious mind determine whether we are thus exposed, or not. All our afflictions, the miseries to which we are subject, and the fears by which we are harrassed, owe their poignancy, yea, their very existence, to sin.

Now as nothing but sin can hurt us, and as sin must prove hurtful to us if its access to our hearts and its influence over us be not checked, let us consider what is the extent of our danger therefrom. But instead of asking what those things are which may hurt us, we may rather inquire, what is there that may *not* hurt us? When we contemplate the depravity of our nature, which, like a diseased stomach, turns its food into poison, or, like a mud-pool, defiles whatever comes into contact with it; when we consider that we are surrounded by invisible enemies, subtle and powerful, who are constantly watching for opportunities of effecting our ruin; and that the world is uninterruptedly presenting objects to our attention, which are calculated to attract our notice, and injure our souls by betraying us into sin,—what is there that may not hurt us? May we not consider every individual thing with which we are conversant, as a source of danger? So great is the depravity of our hearts, that we are exposed to danger both in our worldly and in our religious pursuits. The church as well as the scene of our worldly busi-

ness—the sabbath as well as the days allotted for our secular concerns—the closet as well as the exchange—the Lord's table as well as the social board—are places and occasions of danger. For wherever we are, whatever we do, we carry our fallen hearts with us, to which Satan has easy access. How often, like the fisherman whose bait is seized by a torpedo, have we unexpectedly incurred injury, while engaged in the pursuit of lawful objects, and even of spiritual advantage!

Are we aware of our multifarious and complex danger? The question affords a criterion of our state. Those whom God keeps, he first awakens and alarms, that they may appreciate duly the value of preservation. Like Elisha's servant, (2 Kings vi. 15, &c.) they are first caused to discern the host of foes by which they are surrounded, and to cry out, "Alas, how shall we "do," before the voice of consolation is heard, saying, "Fear not, for they that be with us, are "more than they that be with them;" before "the horses of fire, and the chariots of fire," which are provided for their defence, are discovered to them. Reader, are you sensible of your danger, or not?

In the petition of our collect we acknowledge further our inability to keep ourselves from the varied perils to which we are exposed. For the spirit of prayer for divine conservation arises from a conviction of our own weakness. Without this the adoption of our collect would be gross hypocrisy. Now, an enlightened sinner has in himself demonstrative proofs of his own depravity and consequent weakness, and of the power of his spiritual enemies. He has found by frequent trial, that his heart is prone to evil in

every shape, and is therefore without any power to resist its assaults. He knows that, if there was no devil to tempt him to the commission of sin, he should destroy himself by the spontaneous emanations of his own fallen bosom, unless the grace of God repressed and dried them up. And how much more certain is his destruction without the aid of divine grace, since his "adversary "the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about con- "tinually seeking whom he may devour;" of whose infernal plots against himself every believer has daily and hourly evidence! In the apostacy of the angels, and of our first parents; in the falls of eminent saints, such as David and Peter; on the pillars of salt which apostate professors present to his view in every stage of his pilgrimage; in the warnings and threatenings of Scripture, and even in its promises, he discerns incontestible proof of his own danger and imbecility, and reads these solemn admonitions,— "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed "lest he fall;" "Be not high-minded, but fear:" "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temp- "tation."

The Christian depends, therefore, on "the "bountiful goodness" of an "almighty and most "merciful God." He trusts in him, not only for righteousness, but also for strength. (Isa. lxv. 24.) He cordially renounces all self-sufficiency, not only with a view to justification, but also with a view to sanctification and conservation. A Christian is a child of grace, a momentary pensioner on the "bountiful goodness" of an "almighty and most merciful" Father. This found him a destitute orphan; this took pity on him; this has hitherto fed, clothed, instructed, and protected him; and he is still as poor and

helpless in himself as he was the first moment that God had compassion on him. (See Ezek. xvi. 1–15.) The life of God in the soul of man, like the vegetable life of an exotic brought hither from the East or West Indies, must be continually sheltered from the inclemency of this frigid clime, and supplied with supernatural warmth, or it must die. Exposure to a single blast would shrivel and destroy it. Sinner, do you feel this dependence? and is your life a life of faith on divine care and superintendence?

Our collect expresses an earnest desire of divine interference for our preservation, discovering the importance which is attached to the blessing implored by the awakened mind. It is not a thing of small value which is exposed to danger. It is not a mere trifle about which the believer's fears are excited. No: it is his soul which is at stake—that immortal principle which is the masterpiece of God's creating hand, for which the precious blood of Christ was shed, and which is destined to happiness or misery, world without end, according to its state on its departure from the body. His soul being exposed to imminent danger, it is no wonder that the penitent sinner is earnest in his supplications for preservation, and that our church teaches him to express himself with fervor on the subject, adding vigour by her language to the tone of his devotion. We read in ancient history that Crœsus, king of Lydia, had a son who was born dumb, and continued destitute of the faculty of speech till a very remarkable circumstance was the occasion of calling it into action. On the day in which Sardis was taken by Cyrus, a Persian soldier lifted up his sword to kill Crœsus; when his son, under the influence of terror and

eager desire to save the life of his father, by a wonderful effort of nature, cried out, "Soldier, "spare my father." A discovery of the value and danger of the soul produces a similar effect. It renders the dumb eloquent in supplication. For the soul being lost, all is lost. The soul being preserved, all is well.

Our collect, further, implies "a good hope, "through grace," of preservation "from all "things that would hurt us." For it addresses God as "almighty and most merciful," and appeals to his "bountiful goodness." Now, if God be "able to keep us from falling," (Jude 24,) and if his mercy be, like his power, infinite; if his goodness be munificent; surely we may offer our request with confidence of success. His ability to grant it none can doubt who considers the past achievements of his arm—who contemplates the millions now around his throne, who were conducted safely by his power through the same dangers to which we are now exposed, and were made "more than conquerors through "him that loved them." To doubt of his readiness to "keep us from all things that may "hurt us," will appear equally unreasonable, if we consider the gift of his Son which he hath conferred upon us, and the connexion which subsists between that unspeakable gift and its subsequent benefits, of which conservation is one. The promises of his word confirm our faith and establish our hope. And when we recollect that he called us at first by a spontaneous act of omnipotence and grace "from darkness to light," and "quickened us" when we were "dead in "trespasses and sins," and that the motive to this act of resuscitative energy was derived only from his own bosom; we may dismiss our fears

while we call on him in faith and prayer for present and future help.

But it is time that we hasten to consider the end for which the petition of our collect is addressed to the throne of grace,—"that we, "being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things which God would "have done." In this object of our devout wishes several things require consideration.

It may be asked, What would the Lord have us to do? This was the first inquiry of the trembling and astonished convert, Saul of Tarsus (Acts ix. 6); and it is that of every awakened soul. The answer is supplied by the ten commandments, which are summed up by an infallible expositor, or rather by the divine Lawgiver himself, in the love of God and the love of our neighbour. What our duty towards God and our neighbour is, we were taught in our childhood by the catechetical instructions of our church; wherein we were also informed, "that "we are not able to do these things of ourselves, "nor to walk in the commandments of God "and to serve him, without his special grace; "which we must therefore at all times call for "by diligent prayer."

The accomplishment of the whole will of God, as required by his commandments and enforced by the cogent motives of his Gospel, is the object of fervent desire in every genuine churchman. Without such a desire, we have no ground for calling ourselves Christians or churchmen. Should the motives of this desire be inquired for, they are—the glory of God—and personal advantage. The accomplishment of God's will by his people is manifestative of his glory. It is the proof of love which he demands

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth "them, he it is that loveth me." John xiv. 21. "This is love, that ye walk after his command- "ments." 2 John, 6. Surely this is a motive sufficiently strong to determine our choice, and to incite us to action. But there is another. Our personal happiness depends on a compliance with the divine requisition. It would be as reasonable to expect the enjoyment of corporeal ease and comfort without health, as mental happiness without holiness. Now every creature pursues that to which instinct or intellect directs as a mean of happiness. Brute animals do this, when uncontrolled, with unvarying aim. In their food, their lairs and nests, and indeed in all their aversions and propensions, their election is made with infallible wisdom. Unconverted men would be found to act wisely, if their data were just. For, under the influence of carnal reason, supposing that sensual gratifications and earthly possessions are necessary and all-sufficient to confer happiness, they affect these with the greatest fervency of soul. And in like manner the true believer, being instructed by the word and Spirit of God that in order to be happy he must be holy,—that conformity to the divine will is essential to comfort,—earnestly desires to be "sanctified wholly, in body, soul, "and spirit," and employs the means which are appointed for the attainment thereof. Let the reader inquire if this divine instinct, this wisdom from above, be operative in his heart.

There is a cheerfulness required in pursuing the path of duty, which is not yet attained by us, not even by the most advanced Christian. For this we pray earnestly in our present collect. In a state of perfect holiness the will of God, as

such, is a source of ineffable delight and enjoyment to beatified spirits. But, alas! remaining corruption unnerves our souls, and produces an indisposition for running with alacrity in the way of God's commandments. Are we sensible of this defect, and anxious for its removal?

A preservation from things hurtful—from the prevalence of corruption, the stings of guilt, and the power of temptation—is necessary to a cheerful accomplishment of the divine will. Hence appears the propriety of the connexion which exists between the two clauses of which our collect is composed. When the conscience is burthened with guilt, and the heart is shackled with the chains of sin, duty must of course be a toil. The "heart" must be "enlarged," set free from guilt, bondage, and fear, in order that we may "run in the way of God's com-"mandments." Psal. cxix. 32.

The constituent parts of man are a body and a soul. Both are the workmanship of the divine Artificer, and both have been purchased by the divine Redeemer. It is no wonder, therefore, if both are peremptorily claimed for the service of God. The body is the instrument by which the soul acts, and by which its extrinsic operations are performed. Both these component parts of man are the subjects of divine grace, whereby, when the soul is consecrated to God, the members of the body become also instruments of righteousness unto him. Both these therefore must be made "ready" by the effectual working of omnipotent power for the accomplishment of the divine will, in which both have their offices to perform, that the whole man may be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet "for the master's use, and prepared unto every

" good work." With a firm hope of success in our prayers, let us therefore " draw near with a " true heart, in full assurance of faith, having " our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, " and our bodies washed with pure water," " through Jesus Christ our Lord," by whose " blood we have boldness to enter into the " holiest, by a new and living way, which he " hath consecrated for us through the vail, that " is to say, his flesh."

THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Grant, we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace; that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve thee with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"FOR this shall every one that is godly pray "unto thee in a time when thou mayest be "found," O "merciful Lord;" for "thy faithful "people" discern their need of "pardon and "peace." They know that "in thy favour is "life," and therefore estimate aright the importance of obtaining and preserving it.

Our present collect, though very concise, is very weighty and comprehensive. It consists of —an earnest prayer for "pardon and peace"— and a specification of the ends for which these blessings are implored.

In the petition we shall be led to consider,— the character of the persons who pray—the blessings implored—the manner of praying for them which is adopted — and the character which is drawn of him to whom the prayer is addressed.

The persons on whose behalf prayer is made in our collect, are characterised as God's faithful people. The necessity indeed of pardon is common to all persons, at all times, and in all places. "Enter not into judgment with thy "servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no

" man living be justified,"—is language suitable to every fallen child of Adam; and therefore in the Lord's prayer which is designed for general use, all are taught to implore forgiveness. And our church, in the collect now before us, in the general confession, and in the petition which is annexed to each of the ten commandments, instructs all her members to ask for mercy, knowing that " there is no man who liveth and " sinneth not;" that the most highly sanctified of all the sons of men has much sin to be daily blotted out by the sponge of divine pity, dipped in the detergent fountain of atoning blood.

But though all men need the blessing of pardon, we ask it only on behalf of God's " faithful people," among whom we reckon ourselves. Because none else feel their need of it, and will cordially join in imploring it, none else are qualified to receive it, none else can be partakers of it. For though the grace of pardon is proposed to transgressors as such, and the promises are made to sinners without any reference to personal merit or congruity, yet it is evident that the rebel must be restored to a sense of his rebellion against his rightful sovereign, and the traitor to a cordial acknowledgment of his treasonable spirit and practice, before either of them can be considered to be in a state of mind suited to a reception and improvement of royal mercy. The propriety of thus characterising those who supplicate pardon, is justified by a text of Scripture which has been already cited:—" For this," says the Psalmist, after having mentioned the forgiveness which himself had received from God, " shall every one that is godly pray unto " thee in a time when thou mayest be found." The grace of God is needful to discover to us

our need of pardon, and to suggest the hope which encourages an address to the throne of mercy. It is faith which shews us the evil of sin, its guilt, and the danger which results from it. Without faith pardon can neither be obtained nor enjoyed; for it can only flow from Christ as he is believed on in the heart.

It may be said that every believer is already pardoned, and that there is therefore an impropriety in putting a prayer for remission of sins into the mouths of God's "faithful people." To this it may be answered, that the Lord's prayer is our model for supplication, and that therein our Lord's disciples, who are true believers, are taught to pray for the pardon of their sins. The truth is, that pardon is a repeated or continued act of divine mercy, hourly needed, and hourly to be implored and embraced by faith for the maintenance of peace in the conscience and of love in the heart. And it may be moreover remarked, that although all genuine believers are pardoned from the time that they become such, yet all of them do not enjoy the comfort of a lively hope that they are so; and that those who have obtained mercy, and have a good hope towards God, do not permanently experience the same degree of satisfaction in their bosoms on the momentous subject. Fresh adhesions of guilt to the conscience occasion bereavements of divine consolation, and drive the penitent to the throne of grace for renewed discoveries of "par-" don and peace."

The nature of the blessings which we implore is the next thing which requires our attention. Sin, as "the transgression of the law," renders us liable to punishment, even that punishment by which divine justice has sanctioned its holy

commandments. Now pardon is a removal of guilt, the consequence of which is an exemption from the danger of punishment. The pardoned person is no longer liable to be treated as a criminal; he is "passed from death unto life" with relation to the law of God. The pardon of sin is altogether a free gift, an act of mere grace, as it respects its objects; though it is a dearly purchased blessing, and an act of strict justice, as it respects our surety. It is a benefit in which inviolable equity and boundless compassion are united. God is "faithful and just," as well as merciful, in forgiving the sins of those who penitently confess their sins and believe in Jesus Christ. The inestimable value of this blessing may be inferred from the price it cost, the danger from which it rescues its objects, and the length of the golden chain of which it forms the primary link. The series of consequences resulting from redemption, of which pardon is the first gradation, terminates in eternal life.

But a sinner may be pardoned through faith in the blood of the Lamb, and yet not enjoy peace of conscience; just as a criminal may be freed from the sentence of the law which had been passed on him by the mercy of his prince, and yet remain for a considerable time under apprehension of death. For till he is apprised, by credible testimony, of the mercy which hath been extended to him, his fears will continue to prevail. Now that pardon and peace are not always contemporaries in the experience of believers, is evident from Scripture. For St. John wrote unto some persons "who believed on the "name of the Son of God, that they might "know that they had eternal life, and that they

" might believe on the name of the Son of God" with a faith of assurance for the perfect satisfaction of their minds. (1 John v. 13.) For wise reasons a gracious prince who has signed the instrument of pardon in favour of a convict, sometimes suffers him to remain in ignorance of the grace extended to him, even till he arrives at the gloomy spot appointed for the execution of criminals—not because the prince is reluctant to communicate happiness, or takes pleasure in the protracted anguish of the felon; but because the felon's own profit, and the benefit of others, require such a delay. In like manner, "the God " of all grace" sometimes withholds from his people those tokens of his favour which would assure their hearts of an interest in his pardoning love, or suffers their own remaining unbelief to preclude them from the enjoyment of his salvation, for a longer or shorter space, according as his wisdom directs, even after that they are made partakers of justifying faith. To " dwell safely," and to be " quiet from fear of evil," (Prov. i. 33,) are different things; for though both spring from faith in Jesus, they are different gradations of privilege, and arise from different degrees of the same principle. It is with good reason, therefore, that to our petition for " pardon" we add another for " peace." Herein we pray for a removal of all those obstacles in ourselves which hinder a full discovery of divine goodness to our souls, that we may be prepared humbly and thankfully to receive the blessing of remission, that our unbelief may be helped and our faith increased. A conscious sinner cannot rest in vague indefinite hopes: he cannot be satisfied without solid ground for comfort. " Peace"

with God is essential to the tranquillity of his conscience, his growth in holiness, and his comfort in death.

The state of an awakened mind, in the use of this collect of our church, may be illustrated by a circumstance which occurred a few years since on the southern coast of this island. A man was pursuing his daily occupation on the extensive sands which form that part of the shore, and had walked to an unusual distance from it, when he perceived that the tide was rising very fast. Being impeded in his retreat by the flat boards which were fastened to his shoes for the purpose of preventing his immersion in the sand, which there is not sufficiently firm to support the weight of the human body resting on the narrow basis of the feet, he found that the tide gained upon him. At length it overtook him, and by its pressure on the wooden supporters which he wore fixed him immoveably to the spot where he stood. Here he was obliged to remain in the torture of uncertainty and dreadful apprehension, till the tide had gained its height and had again receded. It gradually rose higher and higher till it reached his chin; when providentially its reflux commenced, and in due time left the poor wretch at liberty to pursue his journey homewards. How excruciating the feelings of his mind were during the increase of the tide, what words can describe? And it is equally difficult to say, what was his joy on his discovery that it had reached its utmost elevation, and began to decrease. Similar to the former are the emotions of a penitent sinner, while he is kept in suspense respecting the pardon of his sins; and analogous to the latter are the sensibilities of a

believer on attaining a good hope through grace that his sins are forgiven.

We are here led to observe that, according to the doctrine which is deducible from our collect, a "knowledge of salvation by the remission of "sins" is to a certain degree attainable by the people of God in the present life—not indeed in a way of mathematical demonstration, but of moral certainty, such as is admitted in the general business of life. Otherwise how can we presume, in the hymn styled *Te Deum*, to "acknowledge also the Holy Ghost the Com-"forter." This, however, is denied by many, and considered as enthusiastic. But to rest satisfied without it, is surely the apex of fanaticism. How dishonourable to the character of God is the supposition that he totally withholds from his people the means of attaining to the knowledge of that, concerning which a suspense must be the torture of the rack to a conscious mind.

But how is "peace" of conscience to be obtained and preserved? It implies a persuasion of reconciliation with God. But how is this persuasion to be produced? St. Paul resolves the question by saying, "The Spirit itself beareth "witness with our spirit that we are the chil-"dren of God." Rom. viii. 16. There are properly two ways by which the Holy Spirit satisfies an awakened soul concerning its divine adoption; either by illuminating the intellect that it may be able to substantiate the comfortable assurance on Scripture evidence; or, by a more immediate communication of his powerful influence to dispel its fears and clear up its doubts. The former is his general method of

procedure. He leads the sinner to compare his own hopes and fears, desires and aversions, joys and sorrows, with the portrait of a Christian as drawn and exhibited to view in the Gospel, and from the resemblance between the copy and the original painting to form a conclusion in his own favour. To this mode of determining our state we are referred by St. Paul, (2 Cor. xiii. 5,)—"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the "faith." But, besides this, there are seasons, in which "the love of God is" so powerfully "shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost "given unto us," as to leave no doubt of our adoption. By these manifestations of divine goodness our doubts and fears are scattered, as the column of smoke is dispersed by a gale of wind. These favours are, however, short-lived and infrequent; and are designed, either to prepare the soul for extraordinary trials, or to comfort it under them. These favours, being gratuitous, we have no right to ask or expect; but are to give all diligence to "make our calling "and election sure" in the ordinary method which is prescribed for that purpose. Let us therefore examine our evidences with accurate attention, not making a sudden gust of passion or a temporary fervor of devotion the test of our safety, but observing the habitual bias of our souls and the general conduct of our lives. For from hence the genuine Christian may without hesitation infer, notwithstanding occasional lapses and continual deficiencies, the renewed state of his heart.

Let not those persons who are unsolicitous about the attainment of pardoning mercy and of peace with God, because they are unacquainted with the demerit of sin, and their consciences

are stupified by the opiate of self-righteousness —let them not condemn the genuine members of our church for their solicitude to obtain "pardon and peace." But rather let them pause, and yield to the rising doubt whether they have any pretensions to churchmanship or christianity. Let those who imagine that they have received these blessings, examine the legitimacy of their confidence. Let as many as long to enjoy them, adopt the prescribed means of attaining them, fervent prayer and close self-examination. And let those, who on good grounds "have peace with God through Jesus "Christ our Lord," beware of losing their inestimable treasure; and, by every exertion and constant circumspection, labour diligently to preserve it.

We proceed to consider the manner of praying for these blessings which is adopted in our collect. There is an earnestness in the mode of supplication, which corresponds with the importance of the blessings implored. No words indeed can fully express the high importance of the benefits for which we here ask, nor the pungent feelings of the awakened mind concerning them. The fifty-first Psalm is perhaps the finest effort of penitential importunity that has ever been committed to paper. But our collect, considering its brevity, is full of energy. O let the professed churchman examine whether his heart be in unison with its spirit or not.

The character of him to whom our prayer is addressed, next demands our attention. It is addressed to our "merciful Lord." "None "can forgive sins but God only." The verdict of man is of no value. The opinion even of good men cannot satisfy an awakened mind.

The ministerial or declarative absolution of the church depends for its validity on its correspondence with the testimony of the divine word and Spirit, with respect to the comfort which it is calculated to afford to any individual sinner. Do I "truly repent and believe?"—is the important question.

The "mercy" of God flowing through the divine Mediator suggests the first dawn of hope to the contrite mind, and from hence also is derived the meridian blaze of assured confidence. Divine mercy is so rich that no past demerit, and no future unworthiness foreseen, can suppress its emotions, or prevent the yearning of its bowels over relenting penitence. O let us remember what it hath done, and that it can be glorified consistently with the utmost claims of rigid justice; and then we shall be encouraged in asking for "pardon and peace" with full confidence of success!

The important ends for which we implore these inestimable benefits, are, "that we may be "cleansed from all our sins, and serve God with "a quiet mind." But as this latter clause of our collect is an amplification or explication of the former, we need not to dwell long upon it.

Purification from sin is two-fold—from its guilt by absolution, and from its pollution by sanctification. These benefits are inseparable from each other, both to be derived only from God, and both to be obtained by prayer and supplication.

It is the former of these which we implore in our present collect. And it is to be observed that a truly penitent soul entreats for the pardon of "*all*" his sins. The generality of men can discern the necessity of pardon for some heinous

offences, of which their conscience accuses them; but a true believer knows that any individual sin, if unpardoned by divine mercy, must consign him to endless perdition. The purification, therefore, of the conscience from guilt is the grand object of God's "faithful people;" because both the comfort of their own souls, and their preparation of heart for the service of God, depend on it.

For "pardon and peace" must be enjoyed in order that we may "serve God with a quiet "mind." Every believer is conscious of a desire to serve God, and to live to his glory. But this desire is often accompanied with much disquietude of soul, whereby the wings of devotion are clipped, and the feet of obedience fettered. Fears and distresses are hostile to that alacrity of soul which the service of God requires. Now, as this disquietude of mind arises from the power of unbelief, the antidote to which is provided in the "two immutable things, in which it is im-"possible for God to lie," in order that his people may have "strong consolation;" we are taught to pray for a pacification of our hearts "through "Jesus Christ our Lord:" and in his name we cannot ask and be denied.

Let those who have heard the doctrine which our church maintains and the temper which she inculcates, examine whether there be any correspondence between their hearts and lips while they use the collect which we have considered. God is willing to pardon and to give peace to his people.—Witness, thou Calvary and thy bloody cross!—Witness all ye who compose the innumerable multitude of redeemed sinners that surround the eternal throne! — But for the communication of these precious benefits he

will be solicited, in order that the supplicant may be humbled and the blessings valued. Their purchase cost our Redeemer tears, and sweat, and blood. And surely it is right that the attainment of them should cost the guilty receiver a few sighs and prayers. The contrite petitioner, "in whose spirit there is no guile," may assure himself of final success in his supplications; for our God "waiteth to be gracious."

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy household the church in continual godliness; that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve thee in good works, to the glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MEN of corrupt and worldly minds mistake and misrepresent the nature and effects of true religion, for they consider it to be a melancholy, senseless, and disadvantageous possession. But "godliness hath the promise of the life that "now is as well as of that which is to come." It brings with it present advantage, and ensures eternal gain. It is the greatest and only permanent treasure. There is no acquisition which is worthy to be compared with it. For it is a source of strong consolation, under all the circumstances of trial to which the heir of sorrow in this vale of tears is exposed. It produces satisfaction in the mind respecting all the events of life whether propitious or adverse, by representing them all as being under the direction and control of him, who hath promised that "all things shall work "together for good to them that love him." It alleviates the unavoidable pressure of affliction which attends our pilgrimage through time, moderates the austerity of its bitters, and heightens

the flavour of its sweets. It is a broad and impregnable shield against the poisoned arrows of adversity; nay, it converts poison into physic and nutriment. If we know what godliness truly means, we shall fully assent to St. Paul's proposition that "godliness with contentment," which is its natural fruit and legitimate offspring, "is "great gain." 1 Tim. vi. 6. If any persons object to this representation, the objection is wholly founded in ignorance. Men substitute the counterfeit for the reality, and then condemn it. But godliness and wisdom are convertible terms; and "Happy is the man that findeth "wisdom; the man that getteth understanding. "For the merchandise of it is better than the "merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than "fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: "and all the things thou canst desire, are not to "be compared unto her. Length of days is in "her right hand: and in her left hand riches "and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasant-"ness; and all her paths are peace. She is a "tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; "and happy is every one that retaineth her." Prov. iii. 13–18.

If godliness be thus desirable as a portion in life, how much more in death! This and this alone can soften a dying bed, cheer the soul in a near prospect of its separation from the body, and light up the taper of hope in the dreary mansions of the tomb. Godliness banishes from the bosom the fear of death, renders its approach desirable, and converts the king of terrors into an amiable friend. It embraces in its wide grasp both time and eternity; and is a never-setting sun that diffuses its bright rays through both, shedding on the former the dawning light of

immortality, and filling the latter with the full blaze of meridian splendour.

The truth of these remarks will be illustrated, while we contemplate the collect of our church which now claims our attention. It contains a petition, and a specification of the end for which it is offered.

We here offer a petition for the Catholic church, in which we include ourselves as its members. We shall inquire—on whose behalf the request is made—and what the request is.

The petition which is here offered respects the universal church under the character of an household. The image is scriptural and often used. Our Lord in his parables frequently adopts it (Matt. x. 25, and xxiv. 45); and in the epistolary writings of the Apostles the church is called "the "household of God," and "the household of "faith." (Gal. vi. 10; Eph. ii. 19.)

This notion of the church is full of sweetness and comfort. Sometimes God is represented as a great King, his church as a kingdom, and his people as the subjects of that kingdom. This view of the subject exhibits a delightful scene for pious meditation. But the image which is used in our collect is still more replete with consolation. For here God is the Father of a family, of which believers are the component members. (See Eph. iii. 15.) This representation implies, on the part of the great Householder, constant and tender regard, care, provision, and government. On the part of the members which constitute the family, it implies the necessity of dependence, fidelity, gratitude, union, and brotherly love. The circle is more confined than in the notion of a kingdom; the bond of fellowship is drawn closer; and therefore the views which

are presented to the mind are more endearing and consolatory.

But are we domestics of this favoured family? Should it be asked, how is this to be ascertained? the answer is ready. How would you ascertain whether you belonged to any other family from which you were naturally an alien? You would inquire, Has any agreement taken place between its master and me? Am I conscious of having offered myself to his service, and of acceptance by him? Do I really serve him? Do I partake of the provisions of his family, wear his livery, and lodge under his roof? Am I under his control, and do I obey his will? In every well-ordered family there are rules to be observed, and privileges to be enjoyed. Am I conformed to the former, and do I enjoy the latter?—"His servants we are whom we obey."

It is a peculiarity of this household that the relations of child and servant are united in all its members. Every servant is the adopted child of the householder, and every child is his willing and obedient servant. This consideration adds greatly to the comfort which is derivable from the image in our collect.

For God's household the church we now offer up our prayers. It is supposed that, as its members, we feel interested in the divine Master's honour and advantage, and in the prosperity of all and every part of the family. But do we feel a lively interest therein? If we do not, surely our prayer is hypocritical, and we have reason to suspect the reality of our professed relation to the family. While we pray for the church, we are supposed to be praying for ourselves as constituent parts thereof. Oh, let us ascertain that we are so! For all who are without its circle

are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, "and strangers to the covenants of promise; "without God and without hope." God's family and Satan's comprise the whole human race. What inquiry can be more important than that which naturally arises from a review of this subject? "Whose am I, and whom do I serve?"

We proceed to consider what is implored in our collect on behalf of the church. We pray God to "keep his household the church in con- "tinual godliness." God's household is a godly household; and we pray that he would keep it such.

But what is godliness? It is defined in our church catechism by the answer which is given to the question, "What is thy duty towards "God?" "My duty towards God, is to believe "in him, to fear him, and to love him, with all "my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, "and with all my strength; to worship him, to "give him thanks, to put my whole trust in him, "to call upon him, to honour his holy name and "his word, and to serve him truly all the days "of my life." Godliness, then, is a supreme and universal regard to God in all our thoughts, words, and actions, influencing the heart and manifested in the conduct. It is a restoration of the divine image; a participation of the divine nature.

Godliness is carefully to be distinguished from morality. "That mere morality makes the sum "and substance of practical religion, carries in it "a double falsehood. It contracts the range of "Christian duty, and it totally misrepresents the "formal nature of the thing. In direct contra- "diction to this wicked maxim, I affirm, that "although religion includes morality, as the

"greater perfection includes the less; so that an "immoral man cannot be religious; yet a man "may be irreproachable in his moral conduct, "and at the same time perfectly irreligious and "profane: irreligious and profane in that ex- "treme, as to be in danger of being cast at last "into outer darkness, with his whole load of "moral merit on his back. The notion that re- "ligion and morality are the same, generally as "it hath too long prevailed, needs no other con- "futation, but what will spontaneously arise "from a just definition of the terms. Religion, "in the practical part, is a studious conformity "of our actions, our wills, and our appetites, to "the revealed will of God, in pure regard to the "divine authority, and to the relation in which "we stand to God, as discovered to us by reve- "lation. Morality is a conformity of our actions "to the relation, in which we stand to each other "in civil society. Morality therefore compre- "hends some considerable part, but a part only, "of the duties of the second table———."

"With the higher branch of duty, with the "love of God, and of consequence with the duties "of the first table, morality hath evidently no "concern or connexion. The worship, which I "owe to God, is certainly no part of the duty "which I owe to man. It is indifferent to "morality whether I worship one God, or many. "Morality is not offended if I worship graven "images. Morality enjoins no observance of "one day in seven; no feast of faith in sacra- "mental rites upon the body and blood of the "Redeemer. For reason, from which morality "derives her whole authority and information— "reason knows not, till she hath been taught by "the lively oracles of God, that the Creator of

" the world is the sole object of worship; she " knows of no prohibition of particular modes of " worship; she knows nothing of the creation of " the world in seven days; nothing of redemp- " tion; nothing of the spiritual life, and the food " brought down from heaven for its sustenance. " Morality, therefore, having no better instruc- " tress than this ignorant reason, hath no sense " or knowledge of that great branch of duty " which comes under the general title of devo- " tion———."

" No clergyman, I apprehend, would be at a " loss to find among his own parishioners, more " than one person living in good credit and esteem " among his neighbours, irreproachable in his " general dealings with the world, a prudent " manager of his affairs, and of consequence not " addicted to any public scandalous excess; but, " with all this, grossly negligent of religious ordi- " nances. Go and expostulate with such a man; " tell him that you are sorry to observe, that he " is seldom seen at church—that he never comes " to the Lord's table—that he never sends his " children to be instructed in the catechism— " that from these symptoms, notwithstanding the " general probity of his life, you are apprehensive, " he thinks less than it may be his interest to " do about the concerns of futurity. The man, " who is by no means lost to all sense of duty, " will take your admonition in good part, but he " will defend himself. And his defence will " be, that he is at least a MORAL man. Press " him farther. Ask him what particular merit " he means to attribute to himself under that " character; would he be understood to plead " not guilty to your accusation; would he pretend " that he is a scrupulous observer of the sabbath

"—never absent without necessity from public "worship, and frequent in his attendance on the "Lord's table? He will confess to you that he "means no such thing—the contrary is notorious "—and he would be sorry to be thought capable "of setting his face to so gross a falsehood. Does "he mean that, notwithstanding his neglect of "the external forms of religion, he hath still "been exact in the better part, in the social "duties of the Christian life? That he is liberal "in alms—tender hearted to the poor—slow to "anger—patient of injuries—ready to forgive—"that his affections are so set on heavenly things, "that he is cautious of excess in the use even of "lawful pleasure? Nothing of all this. The "man is no hypocrite. He will not pretend "that his life will bear so strict a scrutiny. But "still he is a moral man. That is to say (for "every thing more is excluded by his own con-"fessions), he is no murtherer, no adulterer, no "thief, no liar, no spendthrift, and with nothing "more of the Christian character about him than "is supposed to be contained in the negation of "these crimes, he hopes to find admission into "the kingdom of heaven ——."

"Again; religion and morality differ not only "in the extent of the duty they prescribe; but in "the part in which they are the same in the "external work, they differ in the motive. They "are just as far asunder as heaven is from the "earth. Morality finds all her motives here "below: religion fetches all her motives from "above. The highest principle in morals is a "just regard to the rights of each other in civil "society. The first principle in religion is the "love of God; or, in other words, a regard to "the relation which we bear to him, as it is

"made known to us by revelation. And no "action is religious otherwise than as it respects "God, and proceeds from a sense of our duty to "him, or, at least, is regulated by a sense of that "duty. Hence it follows, as I have before "observed, that although religion can never be "immoral, because moral works are a part of "the works of religion, yet morality may be "irreligious. For any moral work may proceed "from mere moral motives, apart from all reli-"gious considerations. And if a moral work be "done by a person not sufficiently instructed in "religion to act upon religious considerations, it "cannot proceed from any other than mere "moral motives; and of consequence it must, "in that instance, be irreligious; not contrary "to religion, but without it*."

Let it be remembered that nothing short of vital godliness will prove that we are members of God's household, or qualify us for admission to a place in his family above. The highest degree of morality, if unaccompanied with true godliness, will leave us the objects of his displeasure. For "the wrath of God is revealed "from heaven against all ungodliness and un-"righteousness of men." A supreme regard to God is essential to a life of faith and of acceptance with God.

Our collect teaches us that, as divine grace is the efficient cause of all godliness in the human heart (for naturally we are all ungodly, and cannot implant in our own bosoms the love and fear of God), so our preservation in the

* Bishop Horsley's primary Charge to the Clergy of the diocese of St. David's. The importance of the distinction which the bishop has stated, will justify the length of the quotation.

possession of it must be the result of divine protection. The soil in which it is sown is unfavourable to its cultivation. The climate is uncongenial to its growth, and even to its existence. A thousand enemies threaten its destruction. A swarm of worldly lusts, numerous as the locusts which covered the land of Egypt, would soon devour it; nay, it would die spontaneously, did not divine power shelter and cherish it.

That God's household the church is in danger of losing the godliness which hath been communicated to it, its experience clearly evinces. If we survey the state of the Jewish church at several periods of its history—that of the Catholic Christian church during the dark ages—that of particular branches of the Catholic church in the present day—we shall discern that the existence of godliness in the world is exclusively to be attributed to a continued exertion of almighty power and goodness; independent of which, idolatry, superstition, heresy, and profaneness, would long since have banished every ray of true religion from the church, and have left it a mere heap of useless rubbish.

That the members of God's household, in their individual capacity, are likewise dependent on divine care for the preservation of personal godliness, daily experience demonstrates. The awful examples of David, Peter, and others, prove, that it is not in man who walketh to direct his steps aright. And the conscience of every awakened sinner concurs in the testimony which these instances bear to man's liability to apostacy and ruin.

If these premises be admitted (and they cannot be denied) O how proper and needful is

the petition of our present collect! And how importunate should we be in the use which we make of it! If we are indeed members of God's household, Christian charity constrains us to pray for the Catholic church, and self-love for ourselves.

The ends for which we pray that the church may be kept in perpetual godliness, are very important, *viz.* "That through God's protec-
"tion it may be free from all adversity, and
"devoutly given to serve God in good works,
"to the glory of his name, through Jesus Christ
"our Lord."

There is a connexion between the exercise of godliness and the enjoyment of prosperity, in the experience both of the church of God as an aggregate, and of the individual believer. While the Jewish church was preserved in the fear and worship of God, it prospered; and when it declined therefrom, evil ensued. The history of the Christian church, though not under the same theocracy, bears a similar testimony to the effect of prevailing piety and impiety. When the eastern church lost its godliness through the leaven of heresy corrupting its whole mass, it soon became an easy prey to the invading Saracen, and affords an awful proof that a departure from godliness is the forerunner of ruin. The experience of individuals needs not to be adduced, as its evidence may be read by every one who takes a retrospective view of his own life. God may indeed try the faith of his church and people by adverse circumstances, for the purpose of purging away their dross and of brightening their character, as he did in the purest age of Christianity. But, generally speaking, piety and prosperity go hand

in hand together. (Comp. Deut. xxx. 9, &c.; vii. 15; Psal. i. 3, 4; lxxxi. 11–16; xxxiv. 12, 13, &c. cited 1 Pet. iii. 10–14; 1 Tim. iv. 8.) It was a remark of the excellent Judge Hale, formed on long observation, that his secular business of the week prospered in proportion as he had sanctified the Sabbath day.

An exemption from adversity is desirable so far as it may be consistent with the glory of God and with our spiritual welfare. With this limitation, therefore, we may lawfully pray for prosperity, both on our own behalf and that of the Christian church. "To the flesh (as the "Apostle himself granteth) all affliction is natu- "rally grievous. Therefore nature, which causeth "to fear, teacheth to pray against all adversity. "Prosperity, in regard of our corrupt inclination "to abuse the blessings of Almighty God, doth "prove for the most part a thing dangerous to "the souls of men ———— Howbeit, even "as these ill effects, although they be very "usual and common, are no bar to the hearty "prayers, whereby most virtuous minds wish "peace and prosperity always where they love, "because they consider that this in itself is a "thing naturally desired: so because all adver- "sity is in itself against nature, what should "hinder to pray against it, although the provi- "dence of God turn it often unto the great good "of many men? Such prayers of the church to "be delivered from all adversity are no more "repugnant to any reasonable disposition of "men's minds towards death, much less to that "blessed patience and meek contentment which "saints by heavenly inspiration have to endure "(what cross or calamity soever it pleaseth God "to lay upon them) than our Lord and Saviour's

"own prayer before his passion was repugnant "unto his most gracious resolution to die for the "sins of the whole world*."

Another object proposed by our petition is, that "the church of God may be devoutly given "to serve him in good works, to the glory of "his name." Wherein it is implied, that the practice of good works depends on internal godliness; for we pray for our preservation in the latter with a view to the promotion of the former. No work is really good which does not spring from the spirit of godliness. The motive, rule, and end, must be godly, or the work performed is ungodly—it is essentially evil. Our outward activity in the practice of duty will be always proportionate in its degree to the inward activity of the power of godliness. Faith and love must be operative in the heart, or spiritual obedience cannot prevail in the life. Unless there be a free circulation of sap in the tree, fruit cannot be produced; nor, if produced, be ripened. The blood must circulate freely in the human body, or its strength will fail, and its functions be impeded.

It is not enough that we perform good works, but we must be "devoutly given" to them. *Totus in illis*, entire absorption in the work, is the Christian's motto. The practice of them must be our business and pleasure. For the service required is that of the heart, which will always discover its tendency by extrinsical acts. The service of the monastery, the life of the quietist, is essentially defective—the result of superstition and error. For "our light must

* Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, vol. ii. p. 192, 193, Oxford edit.

"shine before men, that they may see our "good works, and glorify our Father which is "in heaven." A devout dedication of ourselves to God, in the way of his appointment, is requisite as a testimony that we are members of his household; and nothing short of it can satisfy an enlightened conscience.

Are we then earnestly desirous of being "devoutly given to serve God in good works, "to the glory of his name?" Do we desire an exemption from adversity, both for ourselves and the church, chiefly with a view to his glory? Do we lament our deficiencies, our want of zeal and fervour, of activity and diligence, in this holy cause? Do we labour daily to serve him more devoutly, and pray earnestly for grace that we may? Do we mourn over the declensions of his church from its primitive zeal, charity, and purity, and pray for that unction from above to be poured upon it which may revive its beauty and glory? If, in the use of our collect, we are thus influenced, let us remember, for our encouragement, that our petitions are offered in the name of "Jesus Christ our Lord."

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, our refuge and strength, who art the author of all godliness; be ready, we beseech thee, to hear the devout prayers of thy church; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER is a duty and privilege of the highest importance. It is a duty which we owe to God our Creator and Redeemer, who is entitled not only to our homage, and to daily professions of fealty and allegiance; but also to an acknowledgment of our dependence on him, and our obligations to him. It is an inestimable privilege, inasmuch as it is the appointed mean of obtaining every blessing which we need, the exercise of a gracious permission given us to draw on the royal bank of heaven for the supply of all our wants. As in the human body there is a reciprocal communication between the heart, the seat of life, and all the other parts of the body, by the vital fluid which is incessantly emanating from its reservoir by means of the arteries, and returning to it through the innumerable channels of the veins; in like manner, there is a mutual intercourse perpetually maintained between God and his people, the Spirit of grace flowing from him to them, and returning from them to him in prayer and praise. In this intercourse spiritual life consists.

The veins in which the blood, on its return to the heart, is conveyed, are furnished with valves by which its reflux is prevented*. Answerable to this admirable contrivance in the animal economy, there is a wise provision in the spiritual. For prayer, in order to be successful, and to maintain the life of the soul, must not be a mere expression of want, or desire of relief. But it must be mixed with faith; a reliance on the merit of Christ, and a persuasion of divine ability and willingness to grant our petitions. The promises of God must be considered as faithful and true, and his perfections as pledged for their fulfilment. A fluctuation of mind, between hope and fear, confidence and distrust, expectation and doubt, is sinful. A man thus exercised has no solid and substantial support. Like a wave of the sea, his mind is sometimes exalted to heaven with hope, and then depressed to the deep with fear: sometimes he rolls to the shore of success with rapidity of motion, and then recedes with equal impetuosity towards the gulph of despair.

Such a man, since he dishonours God by his unbelief, and reflects disgrace on every attribute of the divine character, has no ground to expect an accomplishment of God's promises, or a supply of his own wants. God may indeed, and often does, in the riches of his grace, grant petitions

* These "small membranes, or valves," are "like so "many half thimbles stuck to the side of the veins, with "their mouths towards the heart. In the motion of the "blood towards the heart, they are pressed close to the "side of the veins; but if the blood should fall back, it "must fill the valves; and they being distended, stop up "the channel, so that no blood can repass them."—*Quincy.*

thus unworthily offered; and it is well for us that he does. But it is no impeachment of his truth, if they be not granted. For to the prayer of faith the promise is exclusively made. Let the supplicant, says St. James, (chap. i. 6, 7,) "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that "wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven "with the wind and tossed. For let not that "man think, that he shall receive any thing of "the Lord."

These remarks will assist us in explaining our present collect, which consists of—an introductory act of adoration—and a prayer.

The introductory act of adoration addresses God under several appropriate characters. He is "our refuge and strength, and the author of "all godliness."

God is "our refuge." Now, a refuge is a place of safety, where a person exposed to danger may be protected. God is frequently called in Scripture the refuge of his people. "The "eternal God is thy refuge," says Moses to the Israelites. (Deut. xxxiii. 27.) "The Lord is "my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer: "the God of my rock, in him will I trust, he "is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my "high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour; thou "savest me from violence." (2 Sam. xxii. 2, 3. See also Psal. ix. 9; xlvi. 1, 11; xlviii. 3; lvii. 1; lix. 16; lxii. 7, 8; xci. 2; xciv. 22; Isa. iv. 6; xxv. 4; Jer. xvi. 19; and Heb. vi. 18.) In this view of divine grace and power, besides the general idea of protection which it conveys, a reference may be supposed to an ordinance of the ceremonial law, *viz.* to the cities of refuge. To this institution there seems to be an evident

allusion in St. Paul's description of faith, (Heb. vi. 18*,) where believers are characterised as having "fled for refuge to the hope set before "them."

This ordinance was a merciful provision made for the security of those persons who had been involuntarily guilty of homicide, and its particular circumstances strongly illustrate the Gospel of Christ. "These cities were to be of "easy access; to have good roads leading to "them, and bridges wherever there was occa-"sion. The width of these roads was to be, "at least, thirty-two cubits, or forty-eight feet. "At cross-roads they set up posts with inscrip-"tions directing the way 'TO THE CITY OF

* "Confugientes tanquam ad asylum, ut illi Num. xxxv. "2; Josh. xxi. 27. A Deo justo scil. et irato, ad Deum, "misericordem et intercessione filii placatum."—*Grotius et Jacobus Capellus in Poli Syn. Crit.* The city of refuge seems to have been an emblem of the Jewish church; and St. Paul may be supposed to have referred to it as such, Gal. iii. 23. This hypothesis is strongly confirmed by the restriction of the involuntary manslayer to the city of refuge till the death of the high priest; which may well represent the bondage of the church till the death of Christ, after which its emancipation was perfected. But this view of the typical relation which might be intended by this divine ordinance, does not, I conceive, vacate the common and prevailing opinion that the cities of refuge were typical of Christ. For the Jewish church could be an asylum only as itself was under the protection of God reconciled to sinners in Christ Jesus. And without such a supposed allusion to Christ in this institution, how such a concatenation of correspondences can be accounted for, is difficult to conceive. It may be asked, "If Christ be "the antitype, what shall become of those who are charge-"able with *wilful* transgression?" To this it may be replied that there is a sin for which the Gospel has provided no remedy. Or, it may be said that no type agrees with its antitype in every minute circumstance, some grand outlines of resemblance being sufficient for the intended purpose of illustration.

" 'REFUGE.' Every year, on the fifteenth of " Adar, (February,) the magistrates of the cities " inspected the roads, to see that they were in " good condition. The city was to be well sup- " plied with water and provisions. It was not " allowed to make any weapons there, that the " relations of the deceased might not procure " arms to gratify their revenge*." Maimonides further says, that " the six cities appointed by " the law were obliged to receive and lodge " gratis all who should fly to them." The refugee was required to dwell in the city to which he had fled, till the death of the high priest; previous to which, if he ventured to leave it, he was liable to be slain.

All this strikingly corresponds with the plan of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby a full comment is afforded on this institution of the ceremonial law, which was " a shadow of " good things to come." Adam, by the first transgression, was guilty of homicide. He murdered his own soul, and the souls of all his posterity. We have imitated his fatal example, and are also guilty. The avenger of blood, of consequence, acquired a right of demanding satisfaction; and pursued us for that purpose. But God in Christ is the appointed city of refuge, whither we are directed to fly for safety. The access to the asylum is easy, the way to it free from obstructions, and readily to be found. The ministers of the Gospel are, as it were, indexes, pointing to the city of refuge, while they cry, " BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD THAT " TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD." Here no weapons of vengeance are to be seen;

* Calmet's Dictionary.

they are excluded wholly from the place of refuge appointed for us. Here provision in rich abundance is made for all that come, and gratuitously dispensed.—Taking the figure in another view we may observe, that the death of our great High Priest having taken place, all our forfeited blessings are restored, and our liberty is regained.

The believer, then, is a fugitive from the wrath to come, a refugee who has repaired to the appointed sanctuary. Are we believers? Are we conscious of danger? Have we fled from it? Can we say in truth that God in Christ is our refuge? Without previous conviction of sin and faith in Christ, how gross is our hypocrisy in calling God our "refuge!"

God is moreover the "strength" of his people. David has joined these views of God together, (Psal. xlvi. 1,) "God is our refuge and strength, "a very present help in trouble." Very numerous are the passages of Scripture in which God is called the "strength" of his people. (See Psal. xxvii. 1; lxxiii. 26; lxxxi. 1; lxxxiv. 5. 7; cxl. 7; Isa. xxvi. 4; xlv. 24, &c.) As we have no power to resist the avenger of blood, nor to make atonement for sin, so also we are without "strength" to take advantage of the merciful provision which is made for us. When we become alarmed by a conviction of our danger, we find ourselves unable to flee for refuge; and, even, when at the gate of the city, to step into it. When we call God our "strength," we acknowledge a consciousness of perfect weakness—of inability to repent, to believe, or to obey—to resist temptation, to overcome a single enemy, or surmount a single obstacle—or to maintain our station in grace for a single moment. We compare ourselves to one

who is universally palsied; to the sick patient, (Mark ii. 1, &c.) who was borne to Christ by extrinsic help, that he might derive a cure from him.

Are we conscious that this is our state of soul? If not, let us not call God "our strength;" for unless we depend on him for help, we do but mock his divine Majesty while we thus address him. But if we are indeed conscious of our weakness, how comfortable will the divine declaration, which was originally made to St. Paul, prove to our souls! "My grace is sufficient "for thee; for my strength is made perfect in "weakness." Let the reader look to him for strength as well as righteousness, and rejoice in him as both his "refuge and strength."

Let us, for a moment, contemplate the situation of some unfortunate wretch who has fallen into the gaping chasm of Ætna or Vesuvius, for the purpose of illustrating our own. Stayed from the burning lake below by a mere ledge of ashes on which he dropped—dreadfully bruised by the tremendous fall—at first perfectly insensible, but after a while restored to consciousness —behold in him an object calculated to rive your very soul. By occasional coruscations from the fiery gulph beneath, and by a glimmering ray from above, he discerns the horrors of his state. Ten thousand thunders burst on his ears, while showers of fiery cinders fall around him and threaten to overwhelm him. The treacherous ledge on which he lies shifts under him, and seems as if it would fail of affording him its further support. He looks around for help, but none appears. He tries to move, but is unable, for his limbs are dislocated by his fall, and the loose cinders slide under

him. Having made repeated efforts, he despairs, and yields himself up a prey to death. But hark! from the mouth of the volcano a voice salutes his ears, saying, "Be of good cheer." A rope is let down to him which he tries in vain to lay hold of. At length a friend descends into the cavern, fastens the rope around him, and he is drawn up from the jaws of destruction—Such is the believer's experience with respect to the salvation of his precious soul.

God is further addressed in the introduction of our collect as "the Author of all godliness." That he is so, appears from what has been already said. As he is "our refuge," he is "the "author of all" the comforts which "godliness" produces; and as he is "our strength," he is the author of all the sensibilities in which it consists, and of all the power by which its duties are performed. But, as the nature of godliness was explained in our last Essay, we need not again discuss the subject.

We proceed, therefore, to consider the petition of our collect. This is of a general nature, and implores the acceptance of the supplications which we offer as the people of God, who look to him as their "refuge and strength, and the "author of all godliness."

1. We "beseech God to hear the devout "prayers of his church." That he is "more "ready to hear than we to pray, and wont to "give more than either we desire or deserve," is certain*. Yet it is necessary that we should pray, and that we should beseech him that he would be ready to hear our prayers. It is required as a proof of our conviction that we are

* See the Collect for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

unworthy to be heard, and of our entire dependence on his mercy and truth. It is moreover necessary for the purpose of exciting to lively exercise the desires, the faith, and the gratitude of our own bosoms. For it is in the act of endeavour to reach forth the withered arm that we may expect vigour to be communicated to it.

It is supposed that the prayers which we offer are "devout;"—that they arise from a heart which is "clothed with humility," inflamed with holy desire, bowed before the mercy-seat in a posture of reverential prostration, and wholly consecrated to the service of our God. Genuine prayer is the expression of a mind which is thus affected. Are our prayers "devout?" that is to say, do the sensibilities of our souls correspond with our devotional forms? Our language is truly devout; but are our hearts in unison with it? Indevout worship is an abomination with God.

2. We implore "that what we ask faithfully, "we may obtain effectually." Here we specify another essential qualification of successful supplication. It must be the prayer of faith. The difficulty of exercising faith in prayer is felt by all who understand what prayer means. For a consciousness of utter unworthiness, and of the magnitude and value of the blessings which are implored as indispensably necessary to the supplicant's happiness, the inscrutable nature of the agency by which God works, our apparent and supposed failures in many past applications, —these and other considerations present obstacles to the exercise of faith which are not easily surmounted. We therefore often draw on the bank of heaven with a trembling hand, as if we supposed either that its treasury was exhausted,

or its engagements faithless. We forget that, with a reference to the work of our Redeemer, we have a right to subjoin "value paid" to every draft. We do not bear in mind, or at least do not sufficiently credit and respect the grant and promise which we have received—"Ask and ye "shall have." "Whatsoever ye ask the Father "in my name," he will "give it you." Every merchant knows that the credit of England is its grand support, that it is the very life of trade and commerce, and that business cannot be conducted without a continual dependence on it. O that we were equally wise, that we understood the life of faith, and were enabled to enrich ourselves with spiritual blessings by giving implicit credit to his promises whose "truth endureth "from generation to generation!"

But what is the prayer of faith? It is supplication for promised blessings, accompanied with a confident persuasion of eventual success, founded on a hope of interest in Christ the purchaser and bestower of all good, on the truth of the divine promises, and the power and grace of God. Faith is supplied with a satisfactory answer to every discouraging consideration which is suggested to the mind, and makes its humble claim without fear of a disappointment.

The prayer of faith cannot be ineffectual. It is powerful to a degree adequate to its occasion. It must succeed in a manner finally productive of the consequence intended both by the believer's desires and God's promises. Our Redeemer cannot be disappointed of the reward of his merits, the promises of God be broken, nor his faithfulness be impeached. The firm and confident appeal which Joshua made to the Israelites, after their entrance into the land of promise, may

with propriety be repeated, and addressed to the assembled throng of glorified spirits in the last day,—"Ye know in all your hearts, that not one "thing hath failed of all the good things which "the Lord your God promised concerning you; "all is come to pass as it is this day:" To which there will be a general plaudit of assent, without one discordant voice or feeling, and much less one contradicting denial. And should the appeal be recited in hell, its issue would be equally honourable to the character of God; since not one genuine believer would be found there to say, "I trusted in God and was disappointed."

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O Lord, we beseech thee, absolve thy people from their offences; that through thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by our frailty we have committed. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.

THE many infirmities to which the best of men are subject should teach us to be humble, to think with awe of that severe trial which we must all undergo at the bar of God, and to prepare for its approach by earnestly imploring the remission of our sins and the sanctification of our hearts. For "in many things we offend "all:" we are all prone to trip and stumble in our Christian course.

On this humiliating consideration the collect of our church, now to be explained, is founded. It contains—a prayer for absolution—a specification of the end for which absolution is implored—and a repetition of the request. We shall not, however, follow this method in its explication; but shall contemplate—the character of those persons who in our collect implore the pardon of their offences—the quality of those sins from which they pray to be absolved—the necessity of the blessing which they solicit—the nature of it—and the earnestness with which the request is urged.

Those who, in our collect, implore the pardon of their offences, are described as the people of God. They are distinguished from the mass of mankind, from the careless world, and from the herd of hypocritical professors. Their sensibilities and conduct differ from those of all other persons. "They are called, and chosen, and "faithful." They were naturally even as others: "but they are washed, but they are sanctified, "but they are justified in the name of the Lord "Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." To him they are devoted both in heart and life.

The change of persons observable in our collect marks the charitable hope which the church maintains concerning those who join in her worship. She cautions and warns, but she cannot decide. To scrutinise the heart, and to discriminate the sheep from the goats, is the prerogative of Omniscience. In the second branch of our collect, after praying for absolution in the first on behalf of all the people of God, we introduce ourselves as being of their number. We use the same confession with them; we avow the same faith in Christ; we partake of the same ordinances. It is, however, our personal business diligently to inquire whether our conduct herein be not hypocritical, whether the mark of the Lamb be visible in our foreheads, and whether his grace have indeed taken possession of our hearts. For we are to remember that, as under the Jewish dispensation, "they were not all Israel "which were of Israel; neither, because they "were the seed of Abraham, were they all chil"dren:" so also now all who recite the creed are not Christians, those only being truly such in whom "Christ is formed the hope of glory." Unless we are "the people of God," we cannot

sincerely join in a recital of our present collect, which is adapted exclusively to their use, who are, through grace, " turned from idols to serve " the living and true God, and to wait for his " Son from heaven whom he raised from the " dead, even, Jesus who delivered us from the " wrath to come." But this will be more apparent as we pursue our subject.

We proceed, therefore, to consider the quality of those sins, from which the people of God pray to be absolved. They are such as " through " their frailty they have committed." The sins of their unregeneracy were pardoned so soon as they believed in Christ. Then the iniquity, both of their nature and of their past lives, was all washed away. But the people of God remain sinners after regeneration and conversion. For the work of sanctification is a gradual work. Entirely to " put off the old man, and put on " the new," is not the labour of a day; but it is a constant and progressive operation through life. The very office of an advocate established in heaven supposeth commission of sins after regeneration, and during the whole time that the people of God continue in the present world. " If any man sin," saith St. John, speaking of those to whom he wrote for the purpose of arming them against sin, " we have an advocate " with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; " and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not " for our sins only, but also for the sins of the " whole world." 1 John ii. 1, 2. The Lord's prayer and the general confession of our church, which are both designed for the use of the Lord's people, prove that, " if we say that we have no " sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not " in us." The moon hath her dark as well as her

bright spots, even when the sun shines fully on her hemisphere.

The people of God, however, do not sin as others do, nor as they themselves did before they became his people. Their sins are sins of "frailty." For "whosoever is born of God doth "not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: "and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." 1 John iii. 9. There is a material difference between the offences of a regenerate and those of a natural man. The former neither doth, nor can, commit sin as the latter. On this important part of our subject we shall enlarge a little.

The people of God cannot, and do not, live in the habitual practice of known sin, either of omission or commission. They are not (to use the emphatic phrase by which the impenitent are often characterised in Scripture) "workers "of iniquity." (See Psal. v. 5; Matt. vii. 23.) Sin is the trade, the business, the employment of unregenerate persons; and every formal attention to duty is to them an intermission of their usual occupation: whereas the cultivation of holiness is the professed business of God's people; and their offences are deviations from the habitual tendency of their hearts, and are occasioned by their frailty. The people of God fear to sin, and labour to avoid it; whereas others love it, contrive for its practice, and find pleasure in it. The former fight against it, the latter "make provision "for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof."

The main difference lies in the bias of the will. The people of God would be perfectly holy if they could; the impenitent, if they dared, would sin more than they do. (Comp. Rom. vii. 9–25.) The seed of holiness in the saints would bring forth its proper fruits, were it unobstructed in its

growth, and free from extrinsic oppression: and, on the other hand, the principle of corruption in every unrenewed mind, if free from restraining grace, slavish fear, or civil restriction, would produce all its baneful effects in the utmost perfection of enormity. The needle which habitually points to the pole may be diverted from its aim by external violence; but its tendency continues unaltered. The swine wallows with delight in the mire from which the instinct of the sheep recoils.

The offences (trippings or stumblings) of God's people are occasioned by their frailty. The principle of holiness in saints on earth is yet in an infantile state, perfect in its parts but not in its degree. The tendency of their hearts towards God is liable to be shaken, nay, is often disturbed. The plant grows, but the unfavourable nature of the soil and climate impedes its progress towards maturity. They are encompassed by temptations; and to these temptations their senses are constant inlets. Satan is permitted to assault them. And hence they find much in themselves to lament and to condemn.

This leads us to consider the absolute necessity of the blessing which the people of God implore in our collect, *viz.* absolution from their offences. Their offences are many in number. Not a day, an hour, a moment passes by, in which the state of their hearts and lives will bear the exact scrutiny of omniscient purity, conducted according to the extensive requisitions of the divine law. Not a single duty is performed in which this frailty doth not betray itself. The more their consciences are quickened, their minds enlightened, and their hearts converted, the more clearly they discern the multitude and the enor-

mity of their offences. The microscopic eye of a strong faith discovers hideous deformity where reason could see nothing offensive, and where a weak faith perceived only some slight imperfections. The most finely polished slab of marble, viewed through the medium of a powerful magnifier, appears full of asperities. A mortified limb, whose vital qualities have been destroyed by a gangrene, so soon as the mortification ceases, begins to feel; and as the vital qualities are gradually restored, it becomes progressively sensible of its malady which was before unfelt. A sun-beam darting through a crevice into a darkened room, discovers floating particles of dust, which without its aid would be unobserved.

The offences of God's people, though in some respects less heinous than those of others, yet are attended with peculiar aggravations. Many of them are committed against light and knowledge; all of them in opposition to redeeming love. They are hostile to the known interests of their own souls, and to the glory of God their Saviour.

The sins of saints are in themselves damnable, as well as those of others. Even our sins of ignorance, surreption, and daily infirmity, though less enormous than some others, yet are sins. Vain thoughts and idle words incur guilt, though not in the same degree with overt acts of iniquity. We admit not of the Popish distinction between venial and mortal sins; for all sin is meritoriously mortal, whether chargeable on believers or on impenitent sinners. All sin, with a single exception, is pardonable through faith in him whose blood cleanseth from all sin; and no sin can be blotted out by any other means. The people of God, therefore, cannot entertain slight

thoughts of sin, the wages of which they know to be death eternal, and the guilt of which they have learned under the cross of their atoning Lord. Our church instructs us, in our present collect, to consider even our sins of frailty as possessed of a binding power. They bind us over to punishment: and unless we were to obtain absolution from them, they would bind us in "chains of everlasting darkness," from whence there would be no "escape till we had "paid the uttermost farthing" of our debt; and as this involves an impossibility, "the flame of "our torment would ascend up for ever and "ever." The penalty of the violation of God's law, in every instance, is death. And every devious thought or desire incurs that tremendous penalty.

O how proper, how necessary, then, is the constant and fervent adoption of our collect! For if, through faith in Christ, the offences of yesterday have been pardoned, we need to-day absolution from new offences. O that self-examination and reflection may recommend our collect to more fervent and frequent use, and render the house of God, while we recite it, a penitentiary to our souls!

The nature of the blessing which we implore next calls for our attention. What is "abso-"lution?" It is, as the very word implies, a deliverance from the bands of sin. To absolve is to loose from something wherewith the absolved person was bound. Now the guilt of sin is two-fold*, intrinsical and formal, or extrinsical and adventitious. The intrinsical or formal

* See Bishop Hopkins' Exposition of the Lord's Prayer, p. 87, 4to edit.

guilt of sin is the desert of punishment. This cannot be removed. For the sins of justified persons do, in their own nature, deserve punishment as much after they are forgiven as they did before. The pardon of a traitor doth not annihilate the treason of his actions, nor render them unworthy of death. Pardoning grace cannot alter the nature of sin.

But absolution is a deliverance from the bands of sin, or from the obligation to punishment on account of it. The law of God connects sin and punishment together. It threatens eternal death as the reward and wages of sin. Now absolution is a deliverance from those bands by which our sins, as transgressions of the law of God, had bound us over to eternal damnation.

This is the blessing which we implore; and can we ask a greater? For if every sin is a band or chain, the token of our disgrace, and the prelude of our destruction, oh! with how many are we bound! As fast as one is loosened by pardon, we implicate ourselves in others. Constant prayer for absolution is therefore necessary.

But it may be asked (and a solution of the question is essential to the peace of an enlightened conscience)—How can God loosen our bands? How can he free us from the obligation to punishment, without infringing the honour of his own law, violating his own fidelity, and trampling on the rights of immutable justice? The answer to this question is "the "great mystery of godliness." This question our church solves in the conclusion of her collect, where she teaches us to pray for absolution "through Jesus Christ our Lord." The law makes no objection to a vicarious interposition.

The fidelity of God in his threatening is preserved equally inviolate, whether the punishment be inflicted on the original transgressor or on a proper surety. The rights of immutable justice are secured in either mode of requiring satisfaction. The penalty of sin must be endured either by the sinner or by one who stands in his stead. Now a substitute hath been provided—One every way qualified to atone for our sins—One who was enabled, by the adorable dignity of his person, to satisfy every claim that could be made. He has been bound with our chain; the bands prepared for us were imposed on him. He "suffered, the just for the unjust." And, in consequence of his obedience, God can be "just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." From hence arises our confidence in prayer while we implore the forgiveness of sins.

We consider, in the last place, the earnestness with which the request of our collect is urged; a degree of earnestness in some small measure proportioned to its importance. The petition offered is expressed, explained, repeated, and enforced by that name which must prevail. This fervency will not be thought irrelevant, if the foregoing particulars have been duly weighed. For the necessity of absolution is so great, that excessive importunity to obtain it is impossible. Let the reader inquire whether his sensibilities coincide with the energetic language of our collect.

Let the habitual "worker of iniquity" consider his state and tremble. For if the sins of frailty, of which the saints are conscious, bind over to punishment, unless they be forgiven, what a weight of guilt has every impenitent

sinner lying on his head! "If the righteous "scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly "and the sinner appear?" Oh! that, if these pages should fall into the hands of any careless transgressor, he may be stirred up to seek for deliverance from the bands of his sins before it be too late!

THE TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE children of this world cleave wholly to the dust of the earth as their portion. The curse of the serpent (Gen. iii. 14) whose children they are, is exemplified in their hearts and lives; for they lie prostrate on the ground, feeding on its dust, without any desire to arise from the state of degradation to which they are reduced. They are "carnally minded," which "is death" both in its nature and consequences, and yet are neither alarmed nor humbled on account of it. On the other hand, the children of light "groan "being burdened," because their souls cleave to the dust, because there remains a carnal affection in their hearts. Their judgment and their choice lead them to seek those things which are above; yet they lament that their souls often grovel on the earth. Instead of soaring, like the early lark, heavenwards in faith and love, they frequently find themselves crawling like the worm on the dunghill. Others perhaps think them fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; but to themselves they appear dull and lifeless. They therefore beseech God to excite their affections and to invigorate their endeavours, that they may rise superior to

worldly cares and interests, and be more entirely absorbed in the momentous concerns of eternity, having "their hearts surely fixed there where "true joys are to be found." And they are encouraged in supplicating divine grace for this purpose by contemplating past mercy. The "unspeakable gift" of Christ, through whose blood they have redemption; and the "ex- "ceeding great and precious promises," that they who "wait on the Lord shall renew their "strength, shall mount up with wings as eagles, "shall run without weariness, and walk without "fainting,"—lay a foundation for confidence in prayer that emboldens their hopes. The object which they propose to themselves is the uninterrupted and vigorous observance of God's testimonies, by walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameless. "Quicken me after "thy loving-kindness, so shall I keep the testi- "mony of thy mouth," is the daily prayer of the genuine believer in Jesus, the true member of our church.

The desires of the Christian are fully expressed in the collect now under our consideration; which contains—the character of those who therein pray for divine grace—the request which they offer—and the two-fold end which they propose by it; one of which relates to the present life, and the other to the life to come.

Those who in our collect pray for divine grace, are described as God's faithful people; that is, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word "Πιστος" and the English word "faithful" may be interpreted either in an active or passive sense. They mean either believing, or worthy of being believed. The Greek word is translated in its active import, (John xx. 27,)

where our Lord exhorts Thomas not to be "faithless" but believing; and in the same sense it seems to be used (Gal. iii. 9,) where it is said, that "they which be of faith are blessed with "faithful Abraham." (See also Acts x. 45; xvi. 1; 2 Cor. vi. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 2; Tit. i. 6.) This term, in its active sense, is often used for the purpose of describing the Christian church in its aggregate capacity. (Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 2.) The epithet therefore belongs not only to those who are full of faith, and strong in the grace which is in Jesus Christ, but to all believers; for in every church there are those whose faith is in an infantile and feeble state.

But what is the faith of God's elect which thus characterises the people of God? It is an act or habit of the awakened soul, by which it relies exclusively on the Lord Jesus for pardon and salvation. And as this is the leading peculiarity of all those who are taught of God, it is commonly made use of for the purpose of distinguishing the godly from all other persons.

But it may be asked, why is the prayer of our collect restricted to the use of God's "faithful "people?" Is not such a restriction uncharitable? Do not others need that quickening grace which is here implored, even more than they? It is readily admitted that, however needful divine influence may be to the faithful people of God, those who are without faith want it still more: and it is to be observed that we pray for their conversion to the faith of Christ, in various other parts of our diversified liturgy. But none besides God's faithful people feel their want of the blessing which we implore, or join in our petition for it. The prayer is appropriate to the lips of awakened persons. When Elijah prayed

for the widow's dead son, (1 Kings xvii. 21,) his prayer differed widely from what it would have been, if the child had only been dangerously ill. We do not solicit in our collect the first communication of spiritual life; for that is supposed to be already operative in the souls of the supplicants. But we pray for its increase. It is not a resurrection from death to life, but a restoration from sickness to health which we implore. The hope of a plentiful crop implies that there is life in the tree from which it is expected.

We have frequently remarked, in the course of these Essays, that the prayers of our church are accommodated to the use of her members on the charitable supposition that they are, what they profess to be, real Christians. This is inferred from their baptism, their own declarations, and their prayers. A public liturgy must, in the nature of things, be built on this plan. But hints are frequently interspersed in our forms, calculated to produce self-examination and to detect hypocrisy. Indeed, every form furnishes matter for inquiry with relation to ourselves. Are we numbered among "the faithful in Christ "Jesus?" If we are, we feel the propriety and excellency of the prayer which is here prepared for our use. For while faithless persons are torpid and indifferent to the state of their own souls, we are distressed about the languor of our sensibilities and the unfruitfulness of our conduct. We mourn over ourselves, and are anxious for an increase of grace.

The request which God's faithful people make, or the nature of the blessing which is implored, next claims our attention. We pray that God would stir up our wills, and excite them to energy and action.

The will or elective faculty of the natural man is turned from God and godliness. It repudiates whatever is spiritually good and excellent; and, with a greater or less degree of impetuosity according to the temperament of the mind, bodily constitution, and outward circumstances and temptations, its propension is only and always evil. Its tendency is altogether from God towards sin and the world.

The grand effect of divine grace on the soul of a sinner is the conversion of the will to God. Conversion is a new bias given to it, and is produced by "faith which worketh by love." Faith in Jesus exhibits to our view the amiableness of the divine character, the love of God to our souls, and the benefits which it hath conferred upon us, in such a light that an entirely new direction is given to the mind, its enmity to God is destroyed, and succeeded by adoring gratitude and supreme love. Sin is now rendered hateful, the world is outbidden in the price it offers for our affections, Satan's chains of delusion are burst asunder, and the heart is effectually gained for God.

But the spiritual life which is thus kindled by converting grace, is, during our abode on earth, in an infantile, weak, and languid state, though progressively advancing towards maturity. It is still oppressed by disease, so that its functions are performed with pain and difficulty. The Christian, here, is like a patient afflicted with an asthma. His spiritual respiration is frequent, laborious, and short; especially when his soul, (which, alas! often proves to be the case) is in a prone posture. Or, he may compare himself to one who is oppressed by a lethargy. He can scarcely keep his eyes open; his mental powers

are hardly awake. He feels the morbid drowsiness which preys upon him, and endeavours to oppose it; but the opposition is painful and arduous. His renewed will has just activity enough to discover its bias. His state is like that of the atmosphere when there is scarcely wind enough to keep the vane in a fixed direction; or rather when a whiffling breeze causes it to move inconstantly and without any steady aim. His spiritual tendency is discoverable, and no more; like that of a floating body on the surface of a slowly moving stream, which is almost stagnant.

These remarks will help us to understand the petition of our collect. The natural man is dead in trespasses and sins, and destitute of any spiritual sensibility. "The carnal mind is "enmity against God; it is not subject to the "law of God, neither indeed can be." The regenerate sinner is alive indeed. He is raised to newness of life. But he is still far from convalescence while he continues in the hospital of the earthly church. The natural enmity of his heart is destroyed, and love to the divine will has superseded that disaffection to it, which once prevailed within him. But he is still like a tree in winter, which though alive needs the influence of a vernal sun to raise its sap for the production of fruitfulness. Or, if we compare him to a tree in spring, a further degree of genial warmth than he has yet enjoyed is necessary to convert the promising buds of his profession into fruit. The fruit which is produced by the most advanced Christian is yet unripe and sour, and requires "the clear shining after rain" to concoct its juices so that it may become sweet and pleasant to the palate. This Christian believers

of every rank painfully feel; and therefore concur in the petition of our collect with fervency of spirit, and cry, "Stir up, we beseech thee, O "Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that "they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of "good works, may of thee be plenteously re-"warded, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Do not you, Christian reader, feel a need of this awakening, quickening, and animating influence on your heart? Consider your languor in prayer and praise; the weakness of your graces, of your repentance, faith, hope, love, joy, and zeal. Arise, then, and call upon thy God. He only who implanted can invigorate them. Oh! it is a dying life which we now live. And shall we be contented with it? Shall we not importune him who is its author and giver, that he would free it from its obstructions, and cause its operations to be performed with facility and energy?

But it may be asked, how God performs the work of stirring up the wills of his faithful people? A full answer to this inquiry is neither possible nor needful, since the exact methods of divine procedure are inscrutable by our finite minds. It is enough for us to know, that God "giveth his holy Spirit to them who ask him" for the precious gift. We may, however, observe, without seeking to be wise above what is written, that God sometimes applies the threatenings of his law to the fears of his people for the purpose of rousing them to action; and that he sometimes attracts them by an application of his promises to their hopes. Sometimes by awakening providences he wrenches their affections from the present world; and sometimes by foretastes of a better allures their desires after it. His

methods are various and adapted to the different tempers and circumstances of his people. But whatever external means are used, it is the secret power of his Spirit which gives them all their efficacy, and renders them successful.

We proceed to consider the objects which we propose in this petition for enlivening grace. These are two-fold, the one mediate and the other ultimate. The one relates to the present life; and the other to the life to come.

The mediate object which we propose in our prayer for enlivening grace, is fruitfulness in good works. This indeed is the mediate object of redemption, of faith, and of regeneration. "For we are God's workmanship created in "Christ Jesus unto good works, which God "hath before ordained that we should walk in "them." Eph. ii. 10. Christ "gave himself "for us, that he might redeem us from all "iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar "people, zealous of good works." Tit. ii. 14. To this end the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, and the Gospel is preached, *viz.* "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly "furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. iii. 17. For this the Apostles were anxious on behalf of all their converts, because it is the only evidence of a genuine faith, the mean of glorifying God, and of recommending the Gospel to the notice and approbation of others. (See 2 Cor. ix. 8; Col. i. 10; 2 Thess. ii. 17; Tit. iii. 1; Heb. xiii. 21.)

Believers are here compared to trees according to a common Scripture metaphor. The emblem is appropriate in a variety of views, and is calculated to afford us much instruction. As fruitfulness is the object for which a tree is planted, (for

it is carefully to be observed, that the emblem is here restricted to trees of the fruit-bearing species, as distinguished from those of the forest,) so is fruitfulness in good works the end of conversion and faith. A tree must have in it a principle of life, or it can produce no fruit. And there can be no fruitfulness in the soul without the sap of the Spirit; for "without me," says Christ, ye can "do nothing." A tree brings forth fruit according to its species; but the quantity produced depends on the soil and season. No tree can please its proprietor that is unfruitful. If it bring forth no fruit, it is cut down as a cumberer of the ground.

Every true Christian is a tree of righteousness which the Lord has planted in his garden the church. Every genuine member of the church is a fruit-bearing tree. He first bears the fruit of repentance, and then the fruits of a holy walk, according to the station and circumstances in which he is placed. But no faithful person is satisfied either with the quantity or quality of his own good works. His fruits are, in his own estimation, rather "like the shaking of an olive-"tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the "vintage is done," than like the proportion which a good tree ought to produce. He wants to be more prolific of holy thoughts, words, and actions, to the praise and glory of God. A plenteous crop is the object of his ambition. For this he labours and prays day by day.

The ultimate object proposed by our prayer is a plenteous reward in the life to come. Our own happiness, if pursued in a way that is consistent with the glory of God, is a legitimate object of our concern. For Moses, in his celebrated acts

of self-denial which are recorded for our instruction, "had respect unto the recompence of the "reward." Heb. xi. 26.

The reward which is connected with the practice of good works, is a reward of grace, not of debt; for it is through "Jesus Christ our "Lord," exclusively for his merit's sake, that we expect to receive it. But though good works are not the meritorious cause of salvation, yet are they its necessary appendages, and preparatory to the attainment of eternal life. For sanctification is a pre-requisite to glorification, as corporeal-life and health are to corporeal-enjoyment: and the extrinsical works which internal sanctification produces are the invariable effects of holiness, and indeed helps to its growth, just as action is at once the evidence of life in the animal frame, and promotive of its health. The degree of holiness attained here, will therefore be the measure of happiness enjoyed hereafter. A plenteous sowing will produce a plenteous harvest. The effect follows, however, not in a way of merit, but as a natural adjunct; in like manner, as corporeal comfort is consequent on a well-organized body preserved in health by temperance and exercise. Both the cause and effect are the free gifts of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let the reader once more inquire before he lays down the volume, whether our collect express the feelings of his soul or not—whether he be made alive unto God—whether his soul be solicitous for more abundant holiness—whether he pant for spiritual health and vigour—whether he be earnestly solicitous to perform the functions of spiritual life by plenteously bringing

forth the fruit of good works " which are by " Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God"— whether the reward, glittering in the eye of faith, attract his constant attention and excite his holy ambition. These are questions which every churchman should propose to himself before he joins with the congregation of the faithful in reciting this collect of our church.

Those readers who are acquainted with Mr. Nelson's Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England, *will frequently observe such a striking resemblance, both in matter and style between the contents of that compilation and of the following sheets, as will naturally demand an explanation. The truth is, that both Mr. Nelson and the Author of this volume have derived their historical information chiefly from the same source, viz.* Dr. Cave's Primitive Christianity, *of which they have both made a liberal use. This acknowledgment of obligation to that elaborate work is intended to preclude the necessity of distinct references to its several pages.*

ST. ANDREW'S DAY.

Almighty God, who didst give such grace unto thy holy Apostle Saint Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed him without delay; Grant unto us all, that we being called by thy holy word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil thy holy commandments, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE Apostle St. Andrew, for whose ministry the church calls on her members to magnify the goodness of God on the thirtieth day of November, assigning to him the precedence in her Calendar because he was first favoured with the knowledge of Christ; was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, on the lake of Gennezareth. He was the son of Jonas, a fisherman of that town, and the brother of Simon Peter.

It will be remembered that Galilee was the chief scene of our Lord's personal ministry; for it is noticed by all the Evangelists. Nazareth, where his parents resided, and where he was educated, was a city of that district. Capernaum, in whose synagogue he first opened his divine commission, was its metropolis. And Cana, where his first miracle was wrought, also belonged to it. There was his ordinary residence, and throughout all its borders he preached the kingdom of God. From among the inhabitants of Galilee he selected his Apostles, who

were afterwards contemptuously styled Galileans. Now, all these circumstances had a reference to prophecies which were herein accomplished, and which, by their accomplishment, exhibited Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah; for the inspired historian declares, (Matt. iv. 13–15,) that, "leaving Nazareth, Jesus came and dwelt "in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast in "the borders of Zabulon and Napthali: that it "might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Esaias "the prophet," (chap. ix. 1, &c.) "saying, the "land of Zabulon, and the land of Napthali, by "the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of "the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness "saw great light: and to them which sat in the "region and shadow of death, light is sprung "up."

St. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, by whose doctrine he was prepared to receive Jesus as the Messiah. And therefore, when the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the true Messiah to his followers, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God," the appointed sacrifice of whom Isaiah spake, of which all the offerings appointed by the law were types, and "which taketh away the sin of the "world;" Andrew immediately followed him to the place of his abode. Being fully convinced, as it should seem, by personal intercourse with Jesus, of his divine character, he did, what every true convert does—he went and invited his brother Peter to accompany him into the presence of Jesus, with exultation relating the blessed discovery that he had made. True religion is invariably communicative, and inspires all its votaries with an earnest zeal to bring all their friends to an acquaintance with Jesus.

Andrew, however, did not become our Lord's

stated follower till a year after this interview; when receiving full demonstration of the divine character and mission of Jesus by the miraculous draught of fishes, and being called by Jesus to become his continual attendant, he left all and attached himself to the person of the divine Saviour of the world.

We have no memoir of the occurrences of St. Andrew's life after our Lord's death communicated to us by any inspired writer. Ancient ecclesiastical historians have, however, with one accord asserted, that, in the division of the world among the Apostles, Scythia became the principal scene of St. Andrew's labours: And that, after he had widely diffused the knowledge of the Gospel, he suffered martyrdom at Patræ in Achaia: That, after being scourged in a dreadful manner, he was crucified, being fastened to the cross with cords and not with nails; by which mode of execution his death was rendered more lingering and painful. In this situation he survived for two days, during which he instructed and confirmed his followers in the faith of Jesus.

Having given this brief sketch of St. Andrew's life, we proceed to consider the collect which is appointed to be used on the festival dedicated to his memory.* It consists of a preface—a petition —and a ground of hope on which the petition is built.

The preface records the call of St. Andrew to become a follower of Christ, the obedience which he paid to that call, and the agency by which that obedience was produced.

The collect is addressed to "Almighty God," because the act which it describes is exclusively the work of Omnipotence. He, in the person of the incarnate Jesus, summoned Andrew to follow

him: and he, by his effectual grace, inclined the Apostle's mind to a compliance with the requisition. It is he also who "worketh all" that is necessary to salvation "in all" who are saved.

"The calling of our Lord Jesus Christ," referred to in the collect, is mentioned in Matt. iv. 19; a passage which is annexed to it as the Gospel for the day:—"Jesus, walking by the "sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called "Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net "into the sea (for they were fishers). And he "saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make "you fishers of men. And they straightway "left their nets and followed him." Should it be asked, what was implied in the requisition made to Andrew and his brother? The history supplies the answer. Christ demanded a dereliction of every thing for his sake and the Gospel's: an entire submission to his authority as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his church, was comprehended in the call. And the subsequent experience of the Apostle proved that nothing less than this was intended; for after having been trained under the discipline of the cross, and made every previous sacrifice, he was at length required, and through grace enabled, joyfully to yield up the last token of grateful obedience, even life itself, in the cause of his divine Master.

The same definition may be given of the general call which is addressed by the Gospel to sinners of every age and clime. It is necessary that the disciples of Christ should sit down and count the cost before they profess themselves to be his genuine followers. For he hath declared, and the declaration forms one of the immutable laws of his kingdom, that "whosoever will come "after him must deny himself, and take up his

"cross, and follow him:" and that "whosoever "will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever "shall lose his life for his sake and the Gospel's, "the same shall save it." Mark viii. 34, 35. The validity and importance of this part of the statute-book of heaven are confirmed by its frequent repetition; for it is elsewhere enacted by the supreme authority of the King of kings, that he who "loveth father or mother more than "Christ is not worthy of him; and that he who "loveth son or daughter more than him is not "worthy of him:" nay, in words still more emphatical it is decided, that, "if any man come to "Christ, and," comparatively, "hate not his "father and mother, and wife and children, and "brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, "he cannot be his disciple: and that whosoever "he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he "cannot be his disciple." If it should be said that these statutes were adapted to the first era of Christianity, and that they are now become obsolete and no longer in force; it may be asked, By what authority have they been abrogated? No addition has been made to the statute-book since the decease of the Apostles, during whose administration we know that they remained in full force. And no authority but that of the great Lawgiver can have abrogated or superseded them. Nominal Christians, who have the form without the power of godliness, may try to persuade themselves that modern Christianity is essentially different from its model in the New Testament. But they will find to their confusion, when the King shall revisit his church, that these requisitions were intended for every age and for every circumstance in which the followers of Christ might be placed. The actual

abandonment of worldly friendships and possessions, of liberty and life, may not now be called for: but such an indifference to all these things as would produce, were the external circumstances of the church to be altered, the same conduct which the primitive Christians pursued, is now essential to discipleship. A change has arisen in the adventitious appendants to Christianity; but no change can arise in the nature of the thing itself or its effects on the human soul. It invariably converts the hearts of its disciples from the world to God.

The obedience which St. Andrew paid to the call of Jesus was prompt and immediate. Like his fellow Apostle St. Paul, he "conferred not "with flesh and blood." But appreciating duly its divine authority, the danger of a refusal to comply with it, and the advantages which would result from obedience to it, he "readily "obeyed the calling" of his Lord. He did not "linger," like Lot when required to quit his possessions in Sodom; much less did he look back from behind him, like the worldly-minded wife of that patriarch, regretting afterwards the sacrifices he had made. But without hesitation or delay he left all to follow Christ.

It may be said that St. Andrew had little to forsake in obedience to the call of Jesus, and that therefore his conduct afforded a very small proof of a self-denying faith. But the force of this remark, which is calculated to derogate from the power of divine grace, and to lessen the reputation of the Apostle's faith, will be weakened, or even annihilated, when it is considered that what he left for Christ's sake was *his all.* He had a character among his compeers, which he abandoned to reproach; and though his

worldly substance was not large, yet his boat and his nets constituted his living; they afforded him the means of a comfortable support, equal in its extent to the expectations which his birth, parentage, and education, had led him to form. In forsaking these, therefore, he forsook what was equivalent to a throne and a sceptre. Faith does not sit down to a sum in arithmetic, with a view to ascertain by a nice calculation the value of the sacrifices it makes; but it sets "the un-"searchable riches of Christ" against all the world, be it more or less of its favours which we possess; and perceiving at once that not the shadow of a comparison can be made between all the world and the pearl of great price, its decision is prompt and final. Thus, "By faith Moses "when he was come to years, refused to be "called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, chusing "rather to suffer affliction with the people of "God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a "season; esteeming the reproach of Christ "greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; "for he had respect unto the recompence of the "reward." Thus also St. Paul, (than whom no man ever forsook more for Christ's sake,) through the energy of the same divine principle of faith, was enabled to "count all things loss and dung "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ "Jesus his Lord," and for his honour to "suffer "the loss of all things." The instances of Moses "and St. Paul seem to be, in their external cir-"cumstances, more brilliant exemplifications of the genuine spirit of Christianity; but St. Andrew also abandoned his all, and a greater sacrifice he could not make.

The agency by which our Apostle was enabled to act thus, is specified in the collect, lest honour

should be given where none is due. "Almighty "God gave him such grace, that he readily "obeyed the calling of his Son Jesus Christ." This is the main-spring that produces and accounts for all the movements of the devoted heart. Independent of this consideration, St. Andrew's conduct is so contrary to the principles of nature, to the dictates of carnal reason, and to the maxims of worldly policy, that it is utterly enigmatical. There was nothing in the external circumstances or appearance of the Nazarene to sanction his pretensions, or to give weight to his requisitions. He did not flatter his followers by any promises of worldly aggrandizement; but faithfully apprised them that nothing was to be expected in his service but mortification, sufferings, disgrace, and death. But how, it may be asked, did divine influence operate on the Apostle's heart? It enlightened his understanding; it produced a new tendency in the activity of his will; it gave a new bias to the current of all his affections; it made him "a "new creature." And thus it acts in all cases. It does not force its recipients to move in opposition to inclination; but, by an entirely new aspect given to the objects with which the mind is conversant, the judgment which was before erroneous is rectified, and the heart concurs in its decisions. Those who become Christ's disciples are "made willing in the day of his power" to leave all and follow him.

It must be very gratifying to all the orthodox members of our church to observe what anxiety she manifests in all her forms to give the glory to God which is due unto his name, and that is ALL glory and honour and praise. Her correspondence with Scripture in this respect is beau-

tifully exact, and a prominent feature of her character. For conversion, in its rise, progress, and accomplishment, is every where throughout the Bible attributed to the agency of "Almighty "God." Therein "all things" are said to be "of him, who hath reconciled us to himself by "Jesus Christ." "For we are his workman-"ship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, "which God had before ordained that we should "walk in them." Should it be said that St. Andrew had been previously prepared by the doctrine and discipline of the Baptist's dispensation for obedience to the calling of our Lord Jesus Christ; the truth of the assertion is admitted. But it is to be remembered, that it was divine grace which induced his submission to that discipline, and enabled him to give credence to that doctrine. For "the preparations of the "heart in man," whereby it is made ready for an open profession of Christ, as well as "the "answer of the tongue" in such a profession, "are from the Lord." It would be a perverse use of the Baptist's ministry, were it made the instrument of depreciating the glory of Christ, whose herald and harbinger he was.

As the frost and snow of winter are preparatory to the genial warmth of summer, and concur therewith in forwarding the autumnal harvest; so, in the process of spiritual husbandry, many circumstances, both in the course of God's providential dealings, and in the sensibilities of the soul, often co-operate to fit the mind for a reception of an increased measure of divine light and influence which God had before intended to bestow. Thus Cornelius' proselyteship to the worship of the Jews prepared him to welcome St. Peter's message; and thus many devout per-

sons whom St. Paul instructed more perfectly in the way of the Lord, had been disposed by previous tuition to embrace Christianity, so soon as its doctrines were announced to them. But the devout emotions of heart in Cornelius and others were no less produced by the operation of divine power than their subsequent submission to the Gospel of Christ. Without adventitious influence we are dead in trespasses and sins.

The petition which forms the body of the collect is very comprehensive and important, as will be seen from a view of it. As, however, it is founded on the preface which we have already considered at large, fewer words will be necessary to its explication and application. We entreat "Almighty God to grant unto us all, that "we being called by his holy word, may forth-"with give up ourselves obediently to fulfil his "holy commandments, through Jesus Christ our "Lord." The church, like the industrious bee, sucks honey from every flower. She takes occasion and encouragement from that mercy which was shewn to St. Andrew, to instruct her children to pray for a participation of the same in the name of the same divine Mediator, through whom St. Andrew received grace for the salvation of his own soul, and for the communication of the Gospel to the world in the exercise of his apostolic function.

It is the high privilege of all the members of the church that they are "called by God's holy "word," while many nations of the earth are left in ignorance of the great salvation. And may it not be added that the members of the church of England have a superior advantage above other assemblies of professing Christians in the frequent and copious use which is made

of the Scriptures among them? The pure word of God is recited largely in our synagogues, not only every sabbath day, but much oftener. If no exposition of the Scriptures were ever delivered from the pulpit, or if an heterodox exposition were to be made there, though the neglect or abuse of the duty of preaching would involve her ministers in guilt of the deepest dye; yet the church herself would be blameless, having done all that could be done to secure instruction to her children, who would be left without excuse in consequence of the provision she has made for them, should they fail of salvation.

The nature of the call which is addressed to each of us all in the word of God has been already explained; it being similar to that which St. Andrew received from the lips of our Saviour, so far as that related to his becoming a disciple of Christ, and was distinct from the apostolic vocation. This coincidence is the foundation of the collect before us. The terms, therefore, from which and to which we are called, need not to be again defined. It may, however, be remarked, that the church in her collect supposes, what awful matter of fact confirms, that all who have been called have not obeyed the call. In this supposition she is sanctioned by her epistle for the day; wherein it is asserted, that "all have "not obeyed the Gospel" who have heard it;—and that the complaint of Esaias, "Lord, who "hath believed our report," is unhappily but too well suited to the heralds of Christ in every age. An inquiry, therefore, whether we have obeyed the divine call, should be instituted in all our bosoms. We have heard it; but have we complied with it? O that on this momentous

subject there may be "great searchings of heart "among us!"

It is moreover clear that as this prayer is designed for the use of all who compose our worshipping assemblies, the church does not consider any of her members as having already attained to a maturity in grace, or as being already perfect. For, if there were any such among us, this prayer, as well as the Lord's prayer itself, would be unsuitable to our use. But who is there that has "given up himself "obediently to fulfil God's holy commandments," so as to need no further supply of grace? "In "many things we offend all." That we come short of the glory of God, is a melancholy subject of reflection to every humble follower of Jesus. All therefore may with propriety, and every contrite soul will, heartily concur in the language here prepared for us.

What is it that we here pray for? What is it that the awakened bosom desires? These two questions will be solved by the same reply, shewing the adaptation of our liturgy to Scripture and experience. It is the obedience of faith, consisting in universal holiness, an unlimited conformity to all the will of God. This is considered by every true member of the church both as his duty and privilege; this is the aim and scope of his heart. And, therefore, while with deep self-abasement he confesses his remaining imperfections, he "follows on that he may ap-"prehend that for which he is apprehended of "Christ Jesus." "Forthwith" and "fully" are additions which he makes with all the energies of his soul to every petition for sanctifying grace. Reader, can you join cordially and without hypo-

crisy in this prayer? If so, you may consider yourself to be a true son of the church of England, a genuine "member of Christ, a child of "God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of "heaven."

The ground on which we are taught to urge our request is that which the church invariably introduces, and besides which the enlightened mind knows no other. The name of Jesus is the exclusive and all-sufficient plea. His blood and righteousness and intercession afford the only arguments that we have to produce for promoting the success of our prayers. Through him as its channel all grace must flow to sinners. Through him as its only recommendation must our obedience be accepted. And through him as the object of grateful love and the only motive to exertion, must every act of obedience be performed. May his name be as "ointment "poured out" to the heart of every reader! Amen!

ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE.

Almighty and everlasting God, who, for the more confirmation of the faith, didst suffer thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in thy Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in thy sight may never be reproved. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ; to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and evermore. Amen.

THE memoirs of St. Thomas in the New Testament are very short. Concerning his birth, parentage, and education, it is entirely silent, having only mentioned his name in the catalogue of the twelve Apostles. That he was a Jew is evident, and in all probability a Galilean. The names Thomas and Didymus which he bore, are synonymous, being Hebrew and Greek words of the same interpretation, both signifying the Twin. For it was usual with the Jews, when they travelled into a foreign country, to assume a name borrowed from the language of that country, but corresponding in its meaning with their Hebrew appellation. Thus the Messiah is called Christ; Cephas, Peter; and Tabitha, Dorcas.

The first memorable circumstance of St. Thomas which is recorded (for no particular mention is made of his call to become a follower or disci-

ple of Christ) is that which we find, John xi. 16; where we read that, on occasion of the death of Lazarus, our Lord proposed to his disciples a journey from the other side of Jordan to Bethany, where Lazarus had lived, for the purpose of raising him to life. The disciples in general remonstrated with their Lord on the danger to which he would expose himself through the malice of the Jews, and dissuaded him from incurring so great a risk. But Thomas, finding that Christ was resolutely bent on going, exhorted his brethren to accompany him, though at the peril of their lives; avowing his conviction that it was better to die with him, than to forsake their divine Master. O that all his followers, in every circumstance of trial, may form the same decision, and act accordingly!

Our Apostle is again introduced to notice, John xiv. 5. Our Lord told his disciples that he was going to leave them for the purpose of preparing a place for them in heaven; and reminded them that they were acquainted, through the instructions which he had given them, with the way that led thither. St. Thomas, being probably infected with the prevailing notion of a temporal kingdom which the disciples expected their Lord to assume, replied, that they were unacquainted with the place to which he was going, and therefore could not know the way that led to it. In answer to which our Lord points himself out as "the way, the truth, "and the life;" the "all in all" of salvation to lost sinners.

The only remaining passage of the sacred story relative to St. Thomas, is that which forms the preface of our collect, the consideration of which we shall defer till we have slightly glanced

at the notices which tradition has preserved of the subsequent history of our Apostle.

The blessed Jesus being gone to heaven, and having eminently given gifts and miraculous powers to the Apostles, St. Thomas, moved thereto by some divine intimation, is said to have dispatched Thaddæus, one of the seventy disciples, to Abgarus toparch of Edessa, (between whom and our Saviour the letters commonly said to have passed are still extant in Eusebius,) whom he first cured of an inveterate distemper, and afterwards converted, together with his subjects, to the faith. The apostolical province assigned to St. Thomas (as Origen tells us) was Parthia; but Sophronius and others inform us that he also preached the Gospel to the Medes, Persians, Carmans, Hyrcani, Bactrians, and the adjacent nations. Having travelled through these countries, he at last came to India, where he also preached with great success till he fell a victim to the jealousy of the Brahmans, whose superstition vanished at the presence of divine truth. For they barbarously murdered him by thrusting him through with a lance in a solitary place, whither he was accustomed to retire for the purposes of prayer and meditation. His martyrdom is said to have taken place at Malipur, the metropolis of a kingdom on the coast of Coromandel, not far from the influx of the Ganges into the gulph of Bengal. This account, however, seems to rest on very doubtful testimony*.

* See Calmet's Dictionary of the Holy Bible. "It "appears from the writings of the Fathers of the Greek, "Latin, and Syrian churches, that St. Thomas first preached "the Gospel in India. But whether the present race of "Christians, found on the coast of Malabar, owe their

From the uncertain notices of tradition we return to the sure word of truth in the Scriptures, for the purpose of deriving instruction from that passage of the sacred story on which our collect is founded. Our collect divides itself into three parts — a preface or introduction, reciting the principal passage in the life of St. Thomas, which is recorded in the New Testament—a prayer founded on that circumstance —and the ground on which our hope of success in prayer is built, accompanied with a doxology addressed to the ever-blessed Trinity.

The introductory part of our collect recites the conduct of divine Providence in the principal circumstance of the life of St. Thomas, which is recorded in the New Testament.

The anecdote to which our collect refers, and which is the subject of the Gospel annexed thereto, is equally humiliating and encouraging. For in the narrative of the Apostle's unbelief, we survey a picture of our own; and in the condescending manner adopted by our Lord towards his perverse disciple, we see a specimen of his gracious conduct towards all his followers. O that our present meditation may be the means of deepening our self-abasement, and of quickening our souls to increasing admiration and adoration of the grace which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! If we are led to close self-examination, we shall assuredly discover abundant reason to take shame to ourselves on account of our own

"faith to the labours of this Apostle, or whether they "emigrated from Syria at a later period, cannot be so "easily determined. Asseman thinks that the Christians "of St. Thomas received their designation, as well as "their religion, from the Apostle of that name."—*Church Missionary Proceedings*, vol. v. p. 496.

guilty incredulity in relation to the faithful testimony which is afforded us on the most important subjects, and shall wonder at the divine forbearance and compassion which have been exercised towards us.

On the eve of that very day in which our Lord arose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples for the purpose of relieving their minds from the load of sorrow which his death had occasioned, and of satisfying all their doubts respecting the truth of his resurrection. It may be observed that true and fervid love, such as that which Christ bore for his disciples, cannot endure a long separation from its objects, withhold from them any comfort which it is in its power to administer, nor leave them under any trouble which it is able to remove. O that the love of Christians to their Lord bore a stronger resemblance of his love to them! On the occasion above-mentioned, Thomas was absent from his brethren. Whether his absence were justifiable or not, we are not informed. But it seems as if nothing but very urgent business indeed should have separated him from the other disciples at this critical moment; nor can we suppose that his mind could have been sufficiently at ease to have transacted any secular business at this awful juncture. However this may be, it is certain that disciples ought not to "forsake the assembling of themselves together," and that, whenever they do without urgent necessity, they are sure to suffer for their folly.

Our Lord's second visit was deferred for eight days from the former, till the Christian Sabbath again returned. This delay might be intended to answer several important purposes. Its object might be the general benefit of his Apostles,

who would thus gradually be weaned from his personal presence, of which they were soon to be deprived altogether, and the chastisement of Thomas for his neglect of the former opportunity which had been afforded to the disciples of enjoying their Lord's presence, and for the unreasonable hesitation which he indulged respecting the fact which was attested by all his brethren. It was, moreover, an useful trial of faith to all the Apostles, who might in the interval be tempted to dispute the evidence of their own senses, or the constancy of their Lord's affection. But another and a principal reason of the delay seems to have been, that honour might be put on the first day of the week, which was now to supersede the Jewish Sabbath; and, in consequence of our Lord's resurrection thereon, to be, in all succeeding generations, the day particularly appropriated to religious worship. By appearing to his disciples on this day, our Lord has taught us to expect his presence whenever we meet together in his name on his own blessed day.

On this second visit, Thomas was in the circle of the disciples. He had smarted severely by his former neglect. Eight days of painful suspence, and probably of torturing anxiety, had taught him wisdom. It is happy when we are made sensible of spiritual losses which our own sinful negligence has occasioned, and are solicitous to repair them!

Jesus came as before into the room where the disciples were assembled, miraculously introducing himself into their company, the doors of the chamber being shut for fear of the Jews. He placed himself in the midst of them, like a father in the circle of his children, and said,

"Peace be unto you!" He is the same compassionate Saviour still. He does not say, "This "perverse fellow has neglected the means which "I afforded of ascertaining by the evidence of "his own senses that I am risen from the dead; "and then, forgetful of my predictions or dis-"believing their veracity, he obstinately refuses "to credit the solemn attestations of his ten "brethren who have seen and believed. It is "unreasonable that I should comply with the "bold requisitions of a sceptic, who presumes for "his own satisfaction to prescribe to me the "criterion of truth. Let him alone. Let him "follow his own petulant humour, and be ex-"pelled from the college of my faithful adherents." Such a declaration would have been just, and might have been expected from any other lips besides those into which grace was divinely poured. Though the gates of heaven were already expanded for the purpose of receiving back its triumphant Lord—though myriads of angels awaited his ascent, poised on the wing of eager expectation, with their harps ready tuned, and their hands raised to strike the melodious hallelujah; yet the compassionate friend of sinners could not turn his back on the earth, leaving his anxious disciple in a state of suspence, but first complies with his unreasonable requisitions, and thereby affords him the satisfaction that he demanded. Thus he illustrated the character which the Spirit of prophecy had given him by the pen of Isaiah, when it described him as a shepherd that "carries the lambs in his "bosom, and gently leads those that are with "young." The feeble and the burthened are his especial care.

What passed between Thomas and his Lord

is worthy of particular notice. It is probable that Christ conversed, during the interview, with his other disciples. But his condescension to Thomas is alone recorded. Thus the Spirit of inspiration illustrates and exemplifies his own exhortation to "comfort the feeble-"minded."

Thomas, as we have already observed, had rejected the testimony of his brethren that they had seen the Lord, and had required, as the only kind of evidence that could convince him, ocular demonstration of the identity of his person, and even perception by the sense of feeling, that the supposed Jesus was the same who had been crucified. Unreasonable as this conduct was, there is an essential difference between the unbelief of Thomas and the infidelity of the ungodly world. The Scribes and Pharisees maliciously opposed the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, wishing it to be falsified, and using the basest means to overthrow the evidence of the fact. (See Matt. xxvii. 62, &c. and chap. xxviii. 11, &c.) Whereas Thomas was cordially affected to the doctrine, although, through the weakness of his mind, he disputed the fact. The Bible is a bill of indictment against an unconverted man, which it is his interest to confute, if its confutation be possible. To a weak believer it is the record of a parent's will, the probat of which it is his privilege to substantiate. There is the same distinction to be made between Peter's denial of Christ and the rejection of him by the Jews. The latter were influenced by hatred to his person, character, and doctrine; the former acted under the power of temptation, while his heart was sincerely attached to his Master's name and cause. Let us inquire whe-

ther, taking the Bible as an aggregate, contemplating its requisitions as well as its proposals, its precepts as well as its promises, we wish to find it all inviolably true. Are the doctrines of justification and sanctification, in their full extent of latitude—the universal self-denial which Scripture inculcates, as well as the bright reward which it exhibits—accordant to our judgment and dear to our hearts, so that, were it in our power, we would not alter an iota of the sacred volume? This is the turning point which must determine whether our unbelief be the imbecility of a gracious mind, or the hostility of an infidel heart.

Our collect informs us that the unbelief of Thomas was the effect of divine permission. We are not, however, to suppose that God tempted him thereto. But he suffered the occasion to occur in the course of his providence, and the devil to tempt him. And he moreover withheld that grace whereby faith is produced and supported, and without which it cannot exist, and much less be active.

The reason of this permission is stated to have been wise and gracious. It was for the benefit of the church in every succeeding generation of believers. It gave rise to so strong a confirmation of the truth, that even the atheist Spinoza could no otherwise evade its force than by denying to the Apostles the possession of common sense. By the testimony which the Apostles have borne respecting the fact of the resurrection, from the evidence of their own senses, the church is "built "on the foundation of the Apostles, Jesus Christ "himself being the chief corner-stone," as the Epistle for the day informs us. The resurrection of our Lord is the key-stone in the arch of salvation.

The effect which was wrought on the mind of the celebrated Gilbert West, by that peculiar evidence of our Lord's resurrection which was afforded to his Apostles, was very remarkable. He and his friend Lord Littleton, both men of acknowledged talents, had imbibed the principles of infidelity from a superficial view of the Scriptures. Fully persuaded that the Bible was an imposture, they were determined to expose the cheat. Mr. West chose the resurrection of Christ, and Lord Littleton the conversion of St. Paul, for the subject of hostile criticism. Both sat down to their respective tasks full of prejudice and a contempt for Christianity. The result of their separate attempts was truly extraordinary. They were both converted by their attempts to overthrow the truth of Christianity. They came together, not, as they expected, to exult over an imposture exposed to ridicule, but to lament their own folly, and to felicitate each other on their joint conviction that the Bible is the word of God. And their inquiries have furnished two most valuable treatises in favour of Revelation—one entitled, *Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul*; and the other, *Observations on the Resurrection of Christ.*

But we return to the consideration of our collect, and of the fact on which it is founded. Our Lord's condescension to his hesitating disciple deserves our highest admiration, and encourages the liveliest hope of similar indulgence to our own infirmities. He singled out Thomas from his brethren, and immediately addressed him for the purpose of removing his doubts, graciously complying with his perverse requisitions, and

thereby affording a proof of his own omniscience. For so soon as he uttered his general salutation, he said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, "and behold my hands; and reach hither thy "hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not "faithless, but believing." Thus a compassionate physician visits that patient in the hospital first who most needs his aid. Thus also our Lord sent a special message to Peter on the morning of his resurrection, naming him only among the disciples, that he might assure his disconsolate soul of his Lord's continued friendship, notwithstanding his late grievous act of apostacy. (Mark xvi. 7.)

While, however, our Lord invited Thomas to satisfy himself to the utmost respecting the doubts which he had entertained, a severe though tacit rebuke was intended in that invitation—a rebuke which Thomas must doubtless have felt most keenly. But oh! what pity beautifies the Saviour's face, whilst we see him suffering his worm to dictate to him! How strikingly was his own promise by the prophet Ezekiel (chap. xxxiv. 16) fulfilled in this instance!—"I will seek that which was lost, and "bring again that which was driven away; and "I will bind up that which was broken, and I "will strengthen that which was sick."

St. Thomas, immediately overcome by the flood of evidence which poured on his mind, in ecstasy cried out, "My Lord, and my God." Ashamed of his guilty doubts, and overwhelmed with admiration of the grace which had been vouchsafed to him, he adored its Author with lively gratitude and joy. Those only to whom Christ has been spiritually revealed, after a season

of mental darkness and distress, can conceive what the holy Apostle felt when he uttered this precious confession of his faith.

The explicit acknowledgment of our Lord's divinity which Thomas made without receiving any reproof for it, is an argument in favour of that cardinal doctrine which cannot be evaded by attributing the exclamation to the effect of surprise. For, surely, if our Lord had not been justly entitled to these ascriptions of deity, he would have corrected the mistake of his disciple, acting the same part which Barnabas and Paul acted on a like occasion. (Acts xiv. 14, 15.) But no such correction took place; and we are therefore warranted to address the highest adoration to our incarnate Saviour, as Jehovah and "over all God blessed for ever." We may, and doubtless do, err in a failure of giving him the honour which is due unto his name; but excess is here impossible.

On this narrative of the interview between our Lord and St. Thomas, our church founds a prayer to God for grace, that we may "so perfectly, and without all doubt, believe in his "Son's resurrection, that our faith in his sight "may never be reproved." Faith in its origin, progress, and establishment, being the work of God within us, we properly look up to him for the assistance of his grace, that we may believe to the saving of our souls. And the petition is of the utmost importance; since faith is the principal and parent grace of the Christian character, without which it is impossible to please God, or to inherit his promises. O how earnest, then, should we be in imploring a continuance and increase of faith in our souls!

That the faith of God's people is liable to fail of producing its proper effects, is evident from the instances of Peter, of Thomas, of Abraham, though styled the father of the faithful, and of innumerable others. Indeed, a perpetual vacillation of mind must inevitably take place, whenever God withholds his supporting grace; for faith lives and acts by a derivation of power from him. And God sometimes sees it necessary, as in the case of Thomas, to withdraw that aid from which the exercise of faith results. Our correction for remissness in duty, our further humiliation, and the promotion of increasing fervency in spirit, render a temporary and partial dereliction an act of wisdom and mercy.

The suspension of that gracious influence, which is necessary to the exercise of faith, is always the consequence of sin. And therefore those defects in faith which it occasions, are a just cause of divine reproofs. Indeed, the workings of unbelief are so dishonourable to the Lord Christ, by tending to defeat, so far as they are permitted to extend, the purposes of his incarnation, sufferings, and death, that they are peculiarly offensive to God. It is no wonder, therefore, that they meet with keen reprehension. Unbelief, whenever it is predominant and final, excludes its subject from any participation of divine mercy. This was the cause of the destruction which overtook in the wilderness all the Israelites who came out of Egypt, except two persons. (Heb. iii. 19; and iv. 6.) This occasioned also, in the Jewish church, the privation of its privileges as the church of God:—"Because of unbelief they were broken off." Rom. xi. 20. And even when it partially pre-

vails in the bosoms of true disciples, it is very provoking to God. For it is recorded (Mark xvi. 14) that our Lord "UPBRAIDED his disci- "ples with their unbelief" respecting his resurrection from the dead. Well therefore may we pray, considering how ready we are to stagger, how offensive it is to God, how dishonourable to our blessed Saviour, and how injurious to ourselves, that we may be enabled "so perfectly to "believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, that our faith "in his sight may never be reproved."

But it may be asked, whether so stedfast a belief as is deserving of no reproof, is possible to be maintained? It is certain, that no Christian's faith hath ever been free from defects, or commensurate with the divine declarations and promises. It is, however, our duty and privilege continually to implore an increase of faith, to strive against unbelief, and to mourn over its remains within our bosoms. We have, moreover, cause for thankfulness, if we are preserved from those flagrant failures, which would openly disgrace our profession, dishonour our Lord, and dangerously wound our own souls.

At the close of our collect we repeat our petition, and enforce it by the all-effectual plea which the merit of our Lord affords us—beseeching God to "hear us through the same Jesus "Christ our Lord" who is the object of our faith. Christ and his Father are one, in essence and in will. The same compassion, therefore, which our Lord manifested to his doubting disciple Thomas, we may expect in answer to our prayer. We may indulge a well-founded persuasion that our faith will be strengthened and confirmed unto the end. Oh! that both the reader and writer

may be earnest for an increase of this precious grace! Our utmost importunity is justified by the importance of the boon which we implore, and our success ensured by the faithful promises of God. Confident, therefore, of a favourable answer, let us ascribe to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, "all honour and glory, now "and evermore." Amen.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

O God, who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine through the world; Grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may shew forth our thankfulness unto thee, by following the holy doctrine which he taught, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

AMIDST the great cloud of witnesses, who have attested the truth and excellence of Christianity, by their doctrine, lives, and deaths, there is one who in a peculiar manner claims our attention. The circumstances of his conversion were singular; the extent of his usefulness was unparalleled; to him we are indebted as the amanuensis of the Holy Ghost for a very large proportion of the New Testament Scriptures; of him the sacred historian's pen, under the guidance of divine inspiration, has written more largely than of any other Apostle; and (what ought deeply to interest our feelings) there is strong reason to believe that he first planted the Gospel in our own island. Recollecting therefore this most important era of our national history, it becomes us to be deeply thankful while we commemorate the conversion of St. Paul.

St. Paul is not commemorated in the church by his death or martyrdom, as the other Apostles are, but by his conversion, on account of the

remarkable circumstances which attended it. This, therefore, is particularly mentioned in our collect, and made the subject of thanksgiving. The collect contains two parts—a recital of the blessings which God conferred on the world by the instrumentality of our Apostle—and a prayer founded on that recital.

The employment of ministers in the dispensation of the Gospel, and all its resulting benefits, are exclusively the work of God; and to him the whole glory is due. If "Paul plant and Apollos "water," it is "God who giveth the increase." For he raises up and qualifies the instruments for the purposes of his will, and it is his agency, accompanying the word preached, that gives it success. Our church in her collect, therefore, ascribes all the blessed effects of St. Paul's ministry to God as their sole author, and hereby instructs her ministers in the necessity of humility and supplication, and her people in the duty of neither despising the instruments of their spiritual profit on the one hand, nor of idolizing their persons on the other.

The extent of St. Paul's labours and usefulness was immense. By the blessing of God on his exertions the whole Roman empire, then commonly called the world, was evangelized. Churches were planted throughout all its borders, and the banner of the cross erected wherever the wing of the Roman eagle extended its shadow. Our prescribed limits will not permit us to expatiate in this wide field of inquiry; nor indeed is it necessary, as a whole book in the sacred volume is almost entirely occupied by the subject. "The Acts of the Apostles" are chiefly memoirs of St. Paul.

The introductory part of our collect will lead

us to consider—the history and character of St. Paul before his conversion—his conversion itself —and its consequences.

Our Apostle, whose Jewish name was Saul, was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, a city famous for its opulence and learning, the inhabitants of which enjoyed the privileges of Roman citizens. Here he received the first rudiments of his literary education; but he was afterwards sent to Jerusalem to be educated at the feet of Gamaliel in the study of the divine law. He was by trade a tent-maker; for it is to be observed that all the Jews, of whatever rank, were brought up to some branch of business.

The religious character of St. Paul was very exemplary. He was well acquainted, as might be expected from his education, with the divine law, and a strict observer of all its rites and ceremonies. His own pen has informed us (Gal. i. 14) that he "profited in the Jews' religion "above many his equals in his own nation, being "more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of "his fathers:" and, in another place, (Phil. iii. 4-6,) that "if any other man thought that he "had whereof he might glory in the flesh, he "more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock "of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew "of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a pha-"risee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; "touching the righteousness which is in the law, "blameless." But with all these outward advantages and endowments he was an utter stranger to the spirit of the law, and to that internal holiness which it enjoins. Perfectly satisfied with his own attainments, he "trusted in himself that "he was righteous, and despised others." He "was alive without the law," utterly ignorant

of its spiritual requisitions; he was in his own estimation safe from its penalties, and entitled to the divine approbation, the favourite of heaven, and the heir of eternal life. Though he was a man of fine natural talents and of extensive erudition, and had both read and studied his Bible, yet he was unacquainted with "the one thing needful," which cannot be known without divine teaching. For our Apostle tells us, in the account which he gives of his conversion, (Gal. i. 15, 16,) that "it "pleased God, who called him by his grace, to "reveal his Son in him." Previously to this revelation he was a bitter persecutor of the church of God. At the death of St. Stephen, he gave his consent to that atrocious act, and guarded the clothes of them that slew him while they were engaged in their murtherous work. And afterwards, in consequence of his furious zeal and implacable enmity to Christianity, he obtained a commission from the Sanhedrim to persecute with imprisonment and death all the disciples of Jesus whom he could find. It was while he was engaged in the execution of this bloody commission, that he was arrested by divine grace, and from the bitter persecutor of Christianity transformed into its warm and zealous advocate. Of his past conduct, previous to conversion, our Apostle speaks in the most humiliating terms in his epistles to different churches:—"I am" (says he to the Corinthians, 1 Eph. xv. 9, 10) "the least "of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called "an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of "God. But by the grace of God I am what I "am." "I was before a blasphemer, and a per-"secutor, and injurious." 1 Tim. i. 13.

Let us endeavour to apply these memoirs to our own benefit, by observing that it is possible

to have some knowledge of the law in its literal sense, without discerning its spirituality, or feeling its condemning power in the conscience. It is possible to rest in a system of self-righteousness under the Gospel-dispensation as well as under that of the law. And if the disciple of Gamaliel, furnished as he was with all the outward means of information, and filled with zeal for God and godliness, was for a long while deceived in his views of the most important truths, and with the greatest sincerity of mind opposed the Gospel of Christ, let no man who has not sought divine instruction and correction at the feet of Jesus, conclude that he is right in his faith or his practice. The greatest talents and learning, even when directed by a natural honesty of intention and inflamed with fervent zeal for religion, will not ensure to us a rectified judgment, and much less a sound experience, so as to make us "wise "unto salvation," without that divine inspiration for which we are taught to pray so frequently in the various services of our church. And it frequently happens in our own day, that those persons who are most zealous for the form of godliness and are destitute of its power, prove the fiercest enemies of those who, while they duly estimate the shell, value it only as the envelope of the kernel.

The particulars of St. Paul's conversion, as described by himself, (Acts ix. 2, &c.) are so well known, that a rehearsal of them is needless. Omitting, therefore, a recapitulation of the facts, we shall consider two points connected with the narrative.

It may be asked whether there was any predisposing cause in the Apostle's bosom which

induced divine mercy to make him its object? In answer to this inquiry no hesitation needs to be adopted in the use of a direct negative. This will be apparent from—the state of the case—his own account of his selection to grace and to the apostleship—and from his general view of the doctrines of Christianity.

The bosom of our Apostle, till the very moment when he was arrested in his mad career, was filled with enmity to Christ, his doctrine, and his people. He was engaged in a flagrant act of hostility to the cause of Christ, when mercy was manifested to him. His previous religion was the hideous offspring of pride and ignorance, and these principles were less excusable in him than in others because of his superior advantages. If it should be said, that he himself apologizes for his conduct by imputing it to ignorance; (1 Tim. i. 13;) his meaning is plain,—that his ignorance exempted him from the charge of having "done despite to the Spirit of grace" by the unpardonable sin; but that it by no means could afford any recommendation to the divine favour, since he never examined with candour and humility of mind the credentials of Christianity, which would have proved its basis to be divine. And, moreover, the doctrines of the Old Testament Scriptures which he professed to receive, are equally subversive of pharisaism as those of Christ; both having the same objects in view, the humiliation of man, and the exaltation of divine grace. We are justified in saying, that the pride and insolence of self-righteousness are more provoking to God than the vicious practices of thoughtless indifference, and place men at a greater distance from Christ and salvation. For

our Lord told the Pharisees, that publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before them. (Matt. xxi. 31.)

The Apostle's own account of his conversion will confirm this statement:—"It pleased God," says he, (Gal. i. 15, 16,) "who separated me "from my mother's womb, and called me by his "grace, to reveal his Son in me." The good pleasure of God was the impulsive cause of his vocation, and divine grace the efficient. And if the end proposed thereby be inquired into, he states it to be the glory of divine mercy in the salvation of sinners. "For this cause I," the chief of sinners, "obtained mercy, that in me "the first," the greatest criminal, "Jesus Christ "might shew forth all long suffering, for a pat-"tern to them which should hereafter believe on "him to life everlasting." 1 Tim. i. 16. Well, therefore, might he say, after his conversion, "By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Cor. xvi. 10.

The Apostle's general view of the doctrines of grace accords exactly with what he says of himself. For he evidently considers all men as alike under condemnation, as alike incapable of saving themselves, as alike destitute of any personal recommendation, natural or acquired, to the divine approbation, and all who are saved as alike "saved by grace through faith" in Jesus Christ. (See Eph. i. 3; ii. 3–10.)

We now proceed to discriminate the extraordinary from the ordinary circumstances of St. Paul's conversion. Hereby we shall be enabled to determine, after due self-examination, whether the same necessary change, in its essential parts, have been produced in our own bosoms.

The light from heaven which at midnight burst

on the Apostle's organs of corporeal vision, exceeding that of the sun in his highest altitude (whether a real flash of lightning, or an irradiation from the glorified body of Jesus—the voice which he heard—the exhibition of Christ in his bodily shape—the blindness which succeeded it—the commission given to Ananias in a divine dream—and the Apostle's restoration to sight—these were extraordinary circumstances peculiar to the Apostle's case, which were necessary for the proof of his call to the apostleship, for the conviction of gainsayers, for the promotion of his future ministry, and for the support and consolation of his own mind under those great and long-protracted trials to which he was destined.

But conversion, in all its essential properties and effects, is the same thing now as it was then. For it was not the external vision and voice seen and heard by the Apostle, which changed his heart, but an internal and almighty energy exerted on his soul, without which the most surprising miracles must have failed of producing any radical and abiding result. Conversion, in every instance, is wholly to be ascribed to divine grace, as its impulsive, efficient, and final cause. The change in every instance is universal in its nature though not in its degree. The understanding, the will, and the affections, are all the subjects of its influence. And though the circumstantials of St. Paul's conversion are not to be introduced into the usual model of divine operation; yet something analogous to those circumstantials may be observed in the conversion of every sinner who is turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Internal light is diffused on the understanding by the word and Spirit of God, disclosing new

objects to the mind, and clothing those which had been previously beheld in new colours. In consequence of this illumination the soul feels its own blindness, and longs for the scales of ignorance to be removed, that the objects of which it has enjoyed a momentary and imperfect glimpse, may be seen clearly and perpetually. A voice, uttered by the word of God, is heard in the conscience, charging sin upon it, and especially the sin of enmity to Christ, and disclosing the folly of rebellion against him:—"It "is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The effect of this discovery, in proportion to its perspicuity and the want of evangelical consolation accompanying it, is "trembling and "astonishment;" in which the body sometimes becomes a fellow-sufferer with the awakened spirit, so as to lose its desire for its necessary food. God employs his ministers now, as he did Ananias of old, to be the instruments of communicating consolation to his dejected people, of dispelling their fears, and of giving them assurances of his favour. The essentials of conversion are, a conviction of sin, and a recovery of the soul to God, that it may derive from him pardon, sanctification, and salvation.

The consequences of St. Paul's conversion, with respect to his own heart and conduct, ought to be closely examined, as they will help us to determine whether we also be partakers of the grace of God in truth. For the same cause invariably produces the same effects.

We may remark then, in the first place, that St. Paul immediately abandoned all his former legal hopes. He had before expected to recommend himself to God by his own righteousness; but of this expectation he now saw the extreme

folly. "We who are Jews by nature, and not "sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is "not justified by the works of the law, but by "the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have be-"lieved in Jesus Christ, that we might be justi-"fied by the faith of Christ, and not by the "works of the law: for by the works of the law "shall no flesh be justified." Gal. ii. 15, 16. "What things were gain to me, those I counted "loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count "all things but loss for the excellency of the "knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do "count them but dung that I may win Christ, "and be found in him, not having mine own "righteousness which is of the law, but that "which is through the faith of Christ, the righ-"teousness which is of God by faith." Phil. iii. 7–9. Now, does the reader's state of mind afford this evidence of true conversion? Let him consider the Apostle's declarations, and see whether it be possible to form a parallelism between them and his own sensibilities on the subject of salvation by grace.

The Apostle's conversion was also immediately productive of a spirit of prayer. And this is so necessary and so demonstrative a mark of discipleship, that the wisdom of God selected it as the best which could be mentioned for the purpose of convincing and satisfying the suspicious mind of Ananias respecting the change that had taken place in the character of the persecuting bigot. (Acts ix. 11.) Saul the Pharisee had, doubtless, made many long prayers according to the usuage of his formal and ostentatious sect. But he had never prayed till now. He had never before felt his need of mercy, nor approached the

throne of grace as a true supplicant in the name of Jesus Christ. He had before used the words of prayer, but without that temper of mind in which its essence consists.

St. Paul, moreover, so soon as a revelation of redeeming love was made to his soul, surrendered his whole heart to Christ. "Lord, what wilt "thou have me to do?" was the inquiry which he instantly made, with a fixed resolution of complying with the divine will in all its extent. "I "through the law am dead to the law, that I "might live unto God. I am crucified with "Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but "Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now "live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son "of God, who loved me and gave himself for "me." Gal. ii. 19, 20. "God forbid," (he adds in the same Epistle,) "that I should glory, save "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom "the world is crucified to me, and I unto the "world." Gal. vi. 14. "To me to live is "Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. i. 21. From this devotedness of heart to his redeeming Lord proceeded a consecration of his whole remaining life to his honour and glory. He had been informed "how great things he must suffer for the "name of Christ." Acts ix. 16. Yet this deterred him not from an immediate and open profession of Christianity. And when afterwards he found the warning verified in his experience, he could say, "None of these things move me; "neither count I my life dear unto myself, so "that I might finish my course with joy, and "the ministry which I have received of the Lord "Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of "God." Acts xx. 24.

Now, if the reader is indulging a hope that he

hath been made a partaker of converting grace, without which our Lord has declared that no one can enter into his kingdom; let him inquire whether "the love of Christ" have "constrained" him to an unreserved devotion of himself to God? The inquiry is not whether the fervid zeal displayed by the great Apostle fire his bosom; whether the pulse of his soul beat throb for throb with that of this wonderful man; but whether the same effect, though in an inferior degree, be produced within him. If there be life, a pulsation will be perceptible. If conversion have taken place, an habitual desire prevails to glorify God in the body and in the spirit, which are God's.

The preface of our collect having mentioned the diffusion of evangelical light through the world by the preaching of St. Paul, who, by the wonderful circumstances of his conversion, was divinely prepared to be the instrument of spreading it, we proceed to pray that we may be made thankful in the recollection of his conversion, as the means of salvation to ourselves and to thousands of our fellow-sinners. And is there not a cause for thankfulness in the recital which we make? Can any thanksgivings of ours compensate for the benefit bestowed? The personal ministry of the Apostle, extended as it probably was to our own distant shores*, where we may believe that he planted the tree of life among druidical groves, besmeared with the blood of human victims, which our forefathers had shed for the purpose of expiating their sins: this demands incessant praise on our own account, as well as on that of millions now in glory,

* See Bishop Stillingfleet's Origines Britannicæ, p. 37-39.

gathered by his labours from the east, and the west, the north, and the south. But the blessings derivable from his invaluable writings claims perhaps equal if not louder strains of gratitude from us. For who is there among the faithful, that has not been enlightened, quickened, and edified by the Epistles of St. Paul?—an invaluable treasure, which St. Ambrose and St. Jerom compare to the land of Canaan flowing with milk and honey. "Which epistle," saith the former of these fathers, "is not whiter than "milk, sweeter than honey? St. Paul's epistles, "as the breasts of the church, afford nourishment "unto salvation."

We proceed to pray that we may manifest our thankfulness by following the holy doctrine which St. Paul taught. Would our prescribed limits permit us to pursue it, a large field of inquiry is here opened before us; since the doctrine of St. Paul is co-extensive with the system of revealed truth. But we must content ourselves with observing, that the two points of divinity on which our Apostle has particularly enlarged, are, the fall, and the redemption; the lost state of man by nature, and his recovery by Jesus Christ. In his discussion of these cardinal doctrines, to which he was led by their intrinsic importance and the opposition which was made to them by heretical opinions, he has particularly enlarged on the doctrine of justification by faith only; which appears, both from the consequence which the Apostle has given to it in his writings, and from the experience of every awakened conscience, to be the foundation-stone of the fabric of vital Christianity. An error here distracts the whole building from its perpendicularity, and endangers its fall.

It may be remarked that our church, by this petition of her collect, maintains the high importance of doctrinal accuracy, in opposition to those who assert that orthodoxy of opinion is a matter of small moment so that the conduct be correct. Our church gives no sanction to the false candour of such persons as white-wash an utter indifference to Scripture-truth by giving to it the prostituted name of charity. An enlightened understanding and a rectified judgment respecting the essentials of Christian doctrine are pre-requisites to a sound experience and a holy practice. In the construction of the sacred tabernacle and temple, the utmost care was peremptorily required in order that every thing might be made exactly conformable to the model which was exhibited to Moses in the mount. For, as those edifices and their furniture were typical, and illustrative of Gospel truth, a mistake in their formation might have misled men to the ruin of their souls. And surely no less caution is necessary in the accommodation of our doctrinal views to the Scripture model, since our salvation is suspended on a cordial belief of those articles which constitute the Gospel of Christ. (Mark xvi. 16.)

The doctrine of St. Paul is called "holy "doctrine," because holiness is the genuine effect which results from the doctrines of grace. The doctrine of justification by faith only, as maintained by St. Paul in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, as copied in the articles of our church, and as transfused throughout her liturgy, is "the doctrine according to godliness." It is emphatically "holy," for there is no true holiness except what is produced by it; the sem-

blance of piety which is consistent with self-righteousness being essentially defective.

To follow this "holy doctrine," is to seek an accurate acquaintance with it, cordially to embrace it, and practically to adorn it. This is the daily business of a Christian. Thus and thus only can we maintain peace in our consciences, honour God in our lives, enjoy his consolations in our deaths, and be prepared for admission to his presence after death. May this be the daily employment both of the writer and reader of these pages! May both be enabled to "hold the mystery of the faith in a pure con-"science," "through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Amen."

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE, COMMONLY CALLED, THE PURIFICATION OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN.

Almighty and everliving God, we humbly beseech thy Majesty, that as thy only begotten Son was this day presented in the Temple in substance of our flesh; so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MR. WHEATLY has remarked, that "whereas "some churches keep four holy-days in memory "of the blessed Virgin, *viz.* the Nativity, the "Annunciation, the Purification, and the As- "sumption; our church keeps only two, *viz.* the "Annunciation and Purification, which, though "they may have some relation to the blessed "Virgin, do yet more peculiarly belong to our "Saviour."——"The Purification is principally "observed in memory of our Lord's being made "manifest in the flesh, when he was presented in "the Temple."

The collect for this occasion consists of two parts—an introduction, reciting a remarkable circumstance in the life of our Lord—and a prayer founded on that recital.

By an ordinance of the Jewish law, every woman, after her delivery of a child, was esteemed unclean for a certain number of days, at the termination of which she was required to offer a lamb for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon or dove for a sin-offering. If, through poverty, she

was unable to afford a lamb, in that case she offered two doves, one for a burnt-offering and the other for a sin-offering. This law taught the necessity of mortification and humiliation on account of that hereditary corruption which is conveyed to every child which is born into the world by its parents (Psal. li. 7), whereby children are rendered "unclean" (1 Cor. vii. 14), and "children of wrath." (Eph. ii. 3.) For "who "can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? "Not one." (Job xiv. 4.) As an indication and continual memorial of the hereditary corruption which we derive from our descent as the offspring of Adam, it was required not only that the child (if a male) should be circumcised, but also that the mother should be cleansed from her impurity by sacrifice for sin. Some even of the Jewish doctors appear to have understood the spiritual meaning of this institution; for one of them, *viz.* R. Menachem on Levit. xii. has observed, that "no sin-offering is brought but only for sin:" and he adds, "It seemeth to me that there is a "mystery in this matter concerning the sin of "the old serpent*."

The importance which is attached to the doctrines of "original or birth sin," and of redemption by vicarious sacrifice, appears not only from the verbal statements of the New Testament, but also from the figurative rites and ceremonies of the Old. For as these doctrines are interwoven with every page of the former, so are they symbolically represented in every ordinance of the latter. Every sacrifice that was offered, and every act of purification which was performed, taught that "original

* See Ainsworth on Levit. xii.

" sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of " every man that naturally is engendered of the " offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far " gone from original righteousness, and is of his " own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh " lusteth always contrary to the Spirit;" and" that " therefore in every person born into this " world it deserveth God's wrath and damna- " tion*." And every branch of the ceremonial law, moreover, testifies, that " we are accounted " righteous before God only for the merit of our " Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and " not for our own works and deservings†." The Old Testament may be considered as a volume of emblematical or hieroglyphic paintings, to which the New Testament is the explanatory key.

There was another law in the Jewish code relative to the first-born, with which the commemoration of this day is connected. For after that the destroying angel, in consequence of Pharaoh's obstinacy in refusing to dismiss the children of Israel, had cut off all the first-born of the Egyptians, by which judgment Pharaoh was constrained to comply with the requisitions of Jehovah, God ordained that all the Jewish first-born males, both of men and beasts, should be dedicated to him. The firstlings of clean beasts were set apart for sacrifice; as the first-born male children were for the service of the tabernacle, until the selection of the tribe of Levi rendered their service unnecessary. After that selection, the first-born male children were redeemed by a ransom paid into the treasury of the Lord. This signified that the preservation

* Article ix. † Article xi.

of their lives was vouchsafed to them through the ransom of the great atonement, of which the blood of the paschal lamb was a lively representation; and that the lives thus redeemed were consecrated to God. Exemption from eternal death is the result of a ransom paid for us by him who is "the first-born of every crea-"ture;" through whom all his people become members of "the church of the first-born whose "names are written in heaven," and are enabled to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy "and acceptable to God, which is their reason-"able service." (See Exod. xiii. 2.)

It has been questioned whether our Lord and his virgin mother were subject to these laws of the Mosaic code, as the supernatural mode of his birth exempted both from any pollution thereby. However this question be solved, it is certain that a compliance with these requisitions was right; for it became our Lord, as made under the law for man, "to fulfil all righteous-"ness" according to its most rigid demands. Our Lord was therefore "presented in the "Temple," and his mother made the usual offering of a pair of doves, her poverty precluding the more costly sacrifice of a lamb.

Let us pause for the purpose of admiring this instance of the love and condescension of our divine Saviour. Though he was "without sin," hereditary or contracted, yet having undertaken to bear our sins, he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and treated accordingly*. His

* The Alexandrian and some other copies in Luke ii. 22, for αυτης read αυτων, referring the purification to be made in the Temple both to the mother and child. "And "as it must be owned that both, for a while after the birth, "were looked upon as ceremonially unclean, it might not

own precious life, which was to be the ransom for ours, was redeemed at the price of five shekels (Numb. xviii. 15, 16), as though it had been forfeited by transgression. He "was pre-"sented in the Temple in substance of our flesh;" being thus dedicated to God as both the priest and sacrifice whereby our sins were to be expiated, our persons rendered acceptable, and our souls sanctified and saved. If the motive and end of his presentation in the Temple be asked, his own declaration will explain both:—"For "their sakes," he says of his disciples, "I "sanctify myself, that they also might be sanc-"tified through the truth. This our Lord did by several successive acts, of which his presentation in the Temple is one. His self-dedication in the everlasting covenant, when he offered himself to do the will of God, (Psal. xl. 7, 8,) and his assumption of our nature, (Heb. x. 5–7,) may be considered as the first steps in his career of loving-kindness. To these succeeded his circumcision and presentation in the Temple, which were followed by his baptism, and terminated in his sacrifice and the effusion of his blood, which is called (Heb. x. 29) "the blood of the covenant "by which he was sanctified."

Did Christ thus solemnly set himself apart

"be improper (with Erasmus and some of the most con-"siderable expositors) to admit this reading, and to render "it 'their purification,' as referring to them both. For "notwithstanding it is true that Christ had no moral "impurity from which he needed to be cleansed; yet we "may well enough suppose him, as 'he bore our sins,' to "have submitted to this ordinance as well as circumcision: "and, as he came into the world 'made of a woman, made "'under the law,' he would be ready to comply with any "institution of the law, that he might thus 'fulfil all righ-"'teousness.'"—*Doddridge's Expositor.*

to the work of redemption? Did he repeatedly renew his sacred vows? By various acts required in the law did he devote himself to the great work he had undertaken? Surely then it becomes us to "present our bodies a living sacri-"fice, holy and acceptable to God." Surely this is "our reasonable service." Considering the frailty of our nature and our propensity to start aside from God like a broken bow, surely it becomes us to renew our acts of self-oblation continually; nor can any additional tie by which we can bind ourselves be deemed superfluous. To the obligations of the baptismal covenant we should add those of confirmation; and to those of confirmation we should add the obligations which arise from a participation of the mystic supper, repeating this last act of self-dedication "till the Lord come," as often as it may be in our power.

The prayer which in our collect follows the mention of our blessed Lord's presentation in the Temple, is founded on the end for which he was thus dedicated to God. "For their sakes," says he, "I sanctify myself, that they also "might be sanctified through the truth." Keeping this glorious object in view, we pray that "we may be presented unto God with pure and "clean hearts by the same his Son Jesus Christ "our Lord."

The presentation of our persons with acceptance before God in his heavenly temple is the final object of Christian hope. "In his pre-"sence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand "are pleasures for evermore." Of this joy and of these pleasures believers have the antepast in the present world, while they present themselves before God in their Redeemer's name,

and receive from him those tokens of his favour which by his word and Spirit he confers upon them. But still they look forward to the day when "with joy and gladness they shall be "brought, and shall enter into the king's palace," where he keeps his court and admits his faithful servants to familiar intercourse with himself.

As it is written that "without holiness no "man shall see the Lord;" and as every conscious bosom is acquainted with its own impurity; the earnest desire of every genuine Christian is occupied about personal sanctification. For since no one can "ascend into the hill of the Lord," or "stand up in his holy place," but he who "hath "clean hands and a pure heart," the believer's salvation depends on the work of purification which he trusts is begun and carrying on in his soul. All those persons, therefore, who are taught of God, will join heartily in this collect of our church, which is adapted exclusively to the use of her genuine members, who, conscious of internal defilement, and acquainted with the necessity of sanctification, aspire to be conformed to him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and "separate from sinners."

But how is this blessing, in its rise, progress, and high perfection, attainable by sinners? That we have no native disposition towards it, no ability to produce it in ourselves, no meritorious claim on divine agency for its accomplishment, is evident. But this needful blessing is, like all others, the result of the mediation of Christ. He was "presented in the Temple in "substance of our flesh," that we might be "presented to God with pure and clean hearts." His merit procures the grace, and his love constrains to an imitation of his example, rendering

sin odious, and an entire purification from it the object of holy ambition.

But may we suppose that the perfect personal holiness which will be attained by every converted soul at the time of its admission into the presence of the divine Majesty, will afford a title to that admission? Or, are we only to consider it as a needful qualification? It is only to be viewed in the latter respect: for as it is not self-derived, no merit can be attached to it; and therefore, when possessed of this meetness for glory, we must be "presented to God by "the same his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," who for our sakes "was presented in the Temple" at Jerusalem "in substance of our flesh." He must introduce us, or we shall be rejected. His name must be our only plea, his merit our only ground of confidence. And when we are admitted, HE will be the theme of our eternal song, who "loved his church, and gave himself for it, that "he might sanctify and cleanse it with the "washing of water by the word, that he might "present it to himself a glorious church, not "having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but "that it should be holy and without blemish."

ST. MATTHIAS'S DAY.

O Almighty God, who into the place of the traitor Judas didst choose thy faithful servant Matthias to be of the number of the twelve Apostles; grant that thy church, being always preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ST. MATTHIAS not being an Apostle of the first election, immediately called and chosen by our Saviour, particular remarks concerning him are not to be expected in the history of the Gospel. He was one of our Lord's disciples (and probably one of the seventy) that had attended on him the whole time of his public ministry, and after his death was elected into the Apostleship upon the following occasion. Judas Iscariot* had been one of the twelve, immediately called by Christ to be one of his intimate disciples, equally impowered and commissioned with the rest, to preach and work miracles, "was numbered with them, and had obtained part of "their ministry." And yet all this while he was a man of vile and corrupt designs, being wholly destitute of renewing grace; to let us see that there may be bad servants in Christ's own family, and that the wickedness of a minister does not

* So called probably from the place of his nativity, איש קריות, a man of Kerioth, a city anciently situate in the tribe of Judah.

evacuate his commission, nor render his office useless and ineffectual. The unworthiness of the instrument hinders not the ends of the ministration; seeing that the efficacy of an ordinance depends not on the quality of the person, but on the divine institution, and the blessing which God has entailed on it*. Judas preached Christ, no doubt, with apparent zeal and fervency; and, for any thing we know, with as much success as the rest of the Apostles: and yet he was a bad man, a man actuated by sordid and mean designs, one that had prostituted religion and the honour of his office, to covetousness and evil practices. The love of money had so entirely possessed his thoughts, that his resolutions had no other object in view but worldly interest and advantage. "But they that will "be rich, fall into temptation and a snare." This covetous temper betrayed him, as in the issue to the most fatal end, so to the most desperate attempt. Origen calls the putting Christ to death, the most prodigious impiety on which the sun ever shone†. Such indeed was the traitorous surrender of his innocent Lord, into the hands of those who, he knew, would treat him with every circumstance of insolent scorn and cruelty. How little does kindness work upon a disingenuous mind! It was not the honour of the office to which, when thousands of others were passed by, our Lord had called him; his admission to a free and intimate fellowship with his divine person; nor his adoption into the number of his peculiar domestics and attendants that could divert the wretch from his wicked purpose. He knew how very desirous the great

* Article xxvi. † Αγος το παντων ασεβεστατον.

men of the Jewish nation were to get Christ into their hands, especially at the time of the Passover, that they might with the more public disgrace sacrifice him before all the people; and therefore he bargains with them, and for no greater a sum of money than one under four pounds, to betray "the Lamb of God" into the paws of these wolves and lions: in short, he heads the party, conducts the officers, and sees him delivered into their hands."

But there is an active principle in the breast of man, which seldom suffers daring sinners to pass quietly to their graves. Awakened with the horror of the fact, conscience began to be roused and to follow the traitor closely, till he was unable to bear up under its furious assaults. At length being wearied with melancholy reflections on what was past, he threw back the wages of iniquity in open court, and dispatched himself by a violent death, vainly hoping to take sanctuary in the grave, and to meet with that ease in another world which he could not find in this:—"He departed, and went, "and hanged himself; and falling down, burst "asunder, and his bowels gushed out;" leaving a memorable warning to all treacherous and ungrateful, greedy, and covetous persons, and especially to hypocritical and worldly-minded ministers, of the danger to which they are exposed. Indeed, it is a caution to all Christian professors that they suffer not the world to insinuate itself into their affections, but that they "watch and pray, lest they enter into tempta-"tion. Our present state is slippery and insecure. "Let him," therefore, "who thinketh "he standeth, take heed lest he fall." What privileges can be our sufficient fence, what

foundation can we lay sufficiently firm for our dependence, when the miracles, sermons, favours, and familiar converse of Christ himself, could not secure one of his Apostles from so fatal an apostacy?

A vacancy being thus made in the college of Apostles, the first thing that they did after their return from mount Olivet, where our Lord took his leave of them, to St. John's house in mount Sion (where, if we may believe Nicephorus, the church met together) was to fill up their number. With a view thereto St. Peter acquainted them, that Judas, according to the prophetical prediction, being fallen from his ministry, it was necessary that another person should be chosen in his room; one that had been a constant companion and disciple of the holy Jesus, and who was consequently capable of bearing witness of his life, death, and resurrection. Two persons were propounded for a choice,—Joseph, called Barsabas and Justus (whom some consider to be the same with Joses, one of our Lord's brothers), and Matthias; both of whom were duly qualified for the place. The way of election adopted, was by lot, a mode frequently used both among the Jews and Gentiles for the determination of doubtful and difficult cases, and especially the choice of judges and magistrates. And this method the Apostles the rather took, because the Holy Ghost was not yet given, by whose immediate dictates and inspiration they were afterwards chiefly guided. That the business might proceed with the greater regularity and success, they first solemnly addressed themselves to heaven, imploring that the omniscient Being, who governs the world, and perfectly understands

the dispositions and tempers of men, would immediately guide and direct the choice, and shew which of these two he would appoint to take that part of the apostolic charge from which Judas was so lately fallen*. The lots being cast into the urn, the name of Matthias was drawn out, and thereby the Apostolate devolved on him.

Not long after this, the promised powers of the Holy Ghost were conferred on the Apostles, to fit them for that great and difficult employment on which they were sent; and, among the rest, St. Matthias betook himself to his charge and province. The first period of his ministry he spent in Judea; and having reaped a considerable harvest there, he departed to other provinces. His chief residence appears to have been in Cappadocia, near the irruption of the river Apsarus, and the haven Hyssus, both places in Cappadocia. The people of this country were very barbarous, and our Apostle was accordingly treated with great inhumanity.

* Mr. Nelson has well observed, that this solemn procedure of the Apostles "may serve as a direction to all those "that are candidates for holy orders, seriously to examine "themselves, whether they are *moved by the Holy Ghost* to "take upon them that office and ministration; for though "they may impose upon man, yet God seeth their hearts, "and all those various motives by which they are influenced "in so great a concern." "This precedent" (our Author adds) "is also serviceable to the governors of the church; "who, after all their care to admit persons duly qualified, "must beg God Almighty's guidance and direction, that "they may wisely make choice of fit labourers to work in "his vineyard." He also exhorts "patrons of churches to "use their best diligence in providing persons duly qualified "for the great trust they commit to them; and not to "suffer any worldly consideration to bias them in a choice, "of which they must one day give a strict account."

For after various labours and sufferings, and a numerous collection of converts to Christianity, he at length obtained among them the crown of martyrdom, as some say A. D. LXI, or, as others, LXIV. There is no certainty respecting the manner of his death. An ancient martyrology reports that he was seized by the Jews, and first stoned as a blasphemer, and then beheaded. But the Greek offices, and several ancient breviaries, tell us that he was crucified.

On the adoption of St. Matthias into the vacated place of the traitor Judas, as recorded in the introductory part of our collect, its petitionary part is founded. Therein we beseech God to "grant that his church, being always "preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered "and guided by faithful and true pastors, through "Jesus Christ our Lord." This petition deprecates an evil to which the church is exposed, and implores a blessing which is essential to its prosperity.

The evil deprecated is the admission of "false "Apostles," to its government and guidance. And surely if, when our Lord himself, by his personal presence, presided in his church when the college of the Apostles consisted but of twelve persons, when no temporal emoluments were annexed to the ministerial office, but, on the contrary, shame and persecution were its constant attendants,—if, under these circumstances, one of the twelve was a devil, influenced by the spirit of darkness and an imitator of his example, there must now be a very urgent necessity of praying, since the circumstances of the church are so greatly altered, for its preservation, by its almighty King, from false Apostles. For the bodily presence of Christ is

withdrawn; the number of officers in his church is increased with its wide extension in an incalculable degree; temporal emoluments and honours are annexed to the ministerial office; and the spirit of persecution which, directed more particularly against the leaders of the holy flock, tended in the early ages to preserve the fold from the intrusion of wolves in sheep's clothing, is now in many places almost extinct; or, at least, manifested not against the office, but only against fidelity in the execution of it. Under these circumstances how needful is the prayer that the church may be preserved from false Apostles!

But what persons may be considered as false Apostles in the church of God*? Surely all such persons as declare their "trust that they are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon "them the sacred office and administration, to "serve God for the promoting of his glory and "the edifying his people†," when they are unconscious of any other motives than what are wholly of a secular nature—unless indeed they have, since their ordination, been awakened to a due sense of their past hypocrisy, and have renewed their vows to God and his church by self-dedication to the work of the ministry. All those are false Apostles, who having solemnly promised, "the Lord being their helper, to be "diligent in prayers, and in reading of the Holy "Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the

* It is evident that our collect relates not to the outward call, but to inward qualification. For though, to constitute a true minister, the former must be legitimate as well as the latter, the want of the former can have no reference to Judas, who was called to the Apostolate by our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

† Ordination of Deacons.

"knowledge of the same, laying aside the study "of the world and the flesh*;" and yet are devoted in heart and life to the world and the flesh, seeking only the advantages of the former and the gratification of the latter. "False "Apostles" are all those who, being unconverted, ignorant, and careless, have entered into holy orders with false professions on their lips, and with worldly motives in their hearts, and who are not influenced with fervent zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of their fellow-sinners, who spend their time and employ their talents in the pursuit of sublunary objects, regardless of their own solemn vows and the tremendous account which they must one day give. Our deprecation extends not only to those persons who are vicious and immoral, but also to all those who are not imitators of the spirit and conduct of the true Apostles of Jesus.

But why do we so earnestly deprecate the intrusion of false Apostles into the church of Christ? What injury can arise to the church from them? The greatest; for their propagation of erroneous doctrine and exhibition of a vicious practice tend directly to the depravation and ruin of the church, whose welfare is closely connected with the character and conduct of her clergy. For godliness is not connatural to the human mind, so that without instruction, and notwithstanding the malign influence of contagious example in those to whom it is directed to look up, it will maintain its own ground; but it is a plant that requires the aid of all those advantages which God hath appointed in his church, in order that it may thrive and flourish.

* Ordination of Priests.

But who is the "faithful and true pastor," whom we distinguish from "false Apostles?" He is one who "first takes heed to himself," (1 Tim. iv. 16,) and is careful to have a work of divine grace begun and carried on in his own heart, "lest that, after having preached to "others, he himself should be a castaway." He has himself cordially renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, before he undertakes to require it of others. He has preached to his own heart, before he attempts to preach to the hearts of his fellow-sinners. He is furnished with those essential qualifications of a Christian minister, self-knowledge and a knowledge of Christ crucified. He has carefully examined his motives in entering on the awful office, and those which engage him to continue in it, lest, like Judas, he should sell his Master for silver, or "make mer-"chandise of the flock." He labours to be himself a pattern of humility, of self-denial, of heavenly mindedness, and of every virtue which is necessary to the Christian character. He devotes his time and talents to the appropriate duties of his station; he is instant in season and out of season in preaching, prayer, and administration of the holy sacraments. Personal inspection and private instruction of his flock are not forgotten by him. The young and the sick of his people have their share of his pastoral anxiety and labour. In short, his heart is in his work. He can address his people and say with the Apostle, "I seek "not yours but you." The conversion and edification of souls is, next to his own salvation, the grand object of his desires and strenuous exertions. He draws all his studies and cares this way, "that he may both save himself and them that "hear him."

When we pray that the church of God, "being "always preserved from false Apostles, may be "ordered and guided by faithful and true pas- "tors," we implore that the visible head of the church, in the nomination of those who are to preside therein as her bishops, may be directed by God's Holy Spirit to the choice of such persons as may fill their elevated stations to the glory of God and the spiritual prosperity of our Zion. We moreover pray that "our heavenly "Father, who hath purchased to himself an "universal church by the precious blood of his "dear Son, would mercifully look upon the "same, and so guide and govern the minds of "his servants, the bishops and pastors of his "flock, that they may lay hands suddenly on no "man, but faithfully and wisely make choice of "fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of "his church;" not only investigating the literary and moral qualifications of the candidates that offer themselves for ordination, but more especially their motives, principles, and habits, rejecting those whose ends are corrupt, whose doctrines are unsound, and whose habits are unholy, without respect of persons. We pray also for all who are "ordained to any holy function," beseeching God to give them "his grace and "heavenly benediction, that both by their life "and doctrine they may set forth his glory, and "set forward the salvation of all men, through "Jesus Christ our Lord." Nor do we forget those to whose hands is entrusted the important right of patronage, whether individuals or corporate bodies, but implore for them spiritual wisdom and uprightness, that they may commit the precious treasure of immortal souls to such men only as will feed them with the true bread of life

without being induced by any motives of relationship, friendship, or personal interest, to prefer to the cure of souls an hireling who careth not for the sheep.

How important is the prayer which the commemoration of St. Matthias suggests for our use! May the reader feel its importance, and be excited to offer it to the throne of grace with that fervour and importunity which its weighty nature demands! And oh! that God may hear and answer it, "through Jesus Christ our Lord! "*Amen.*"

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY*.

We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts; that as we have known the incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel: so by his cross and passion we may be brought unto the glory of his resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THOUGH the title of our present collect refers only to the Virgin-mother of our blessed Lord; yet the collect itself relates wholly to her adorable Son. It records a fact in his history,—and founds a prayer on the recognition of that fact.

The fact recorded is the annunciation of our Lord's conception to the Virgin who was to become his mother, by the ministry of an angel. Of this circumstance an account is given by the Evangelist St. Luke, in the first chapter of his Gospel.

"In the sixth month after Elizabeth (the mo-
"ther of St. John the Baptist) had conceived, the

* Both this festival and that of the *Purification* appear to be of comparatively late institution in the Christian church. For the pieces attributed to Chrysostom, Gregory Thaumaturgus, and Athanasius, on which some authors have founded a belief of their antiquity, are rejected by the best critics as spurious writings. See Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, book xx. chap. viii. § 4, 5.

" same angel Gabriel, who had been the messenger
" of such good news to Zacharias, was sent from
" God to a small and inconsiderable city of Galilee
" which was called Nazareth; being charged with
" an important commission to a virgin, who was
" contracted, according to the Jewish method of
" espousals, to a man whose name was Joseph; a
" descendant of the royal house of David, which
" illustrious family was now reduced to so low a
" condition that Joseph followed the employ-
" ment of a carpenter. And the Virgin's name
" was Mary, of the same lineage. And the
" angel entered into the apartment in which
" she was alone; and standing before her, sur-
" rounded with an extraordinary lustre, he ad-
" dressed himself unto her, and said, Hail, O
" thou distinguished favourite of heaven! I con-
" gratulate thy happiness; for the Lord is with
" thee, and is about to manifest his condescend-
" ing regard in a manner which shall oblige all
" around thee to acknowledge, that thou art
" blessed among women, the greatest and hap-
" piest of thy sex.

" Now the pious and modest virgin, when she
" saw the appearance of the angel, and heard
" his message, as she plainly perceived it to be
" something of a very extraordinary nature,
" was much disturbed at this discourse; and
" not imagining herself at all worthy of such
" applause and congratulation, she reasoned with
" herself for a while, what kind of salutation
" this could be, and from what original it could
" proceed.

" And the angel immediately perceiving it,
" to disperse the doubt she was in, said unto her
" again, Fear not, Mary; for I am a messenger
" sent from heaven to tell thee that thou hast

" found signal favour with God. And behold,
" and observe it with due regard; for I assure
" thee in his name, that from this very time
" thou shalt be with child, and at the proper
" season shalt be delivered of a son, and shalt
" call his name JESUS, the divine Saviour*; for
" he shall come on that important errand, to
" save men from the tyranny of sin and the
" displeasure of God. He shall be incomparably
" great and glorious, insomuch that he shall justly
" be called the Son of the most high God; and
" the Lord God shall give unto him the throne
" of David his father, from whom thou art
" descended; so that, like David, he shall be the
" sovereign of God's chosen people, and possess
" that extensive empire, which was promised to
" the seed of that holy Patriarch. (Psal. ii. 7, 8;
" and Psal. cxxxii. 11, 12.) And he shall inherit
" the kingdom with this circumstance of superior
" glory, that whereas David is now sleeping with
" his fathers, this exalted Prince shall rule over
" the house of Jacob (even all the true Israel of
" God) for ever; and though the most potent
" monarchies of the earth will be successively
" dissolved, yet of his kingdom there shall be no
" end, even as long as the sun and moon endure.
" (See Psal. lxxii. 5. 17; Isa. ix. 7; Dan.
" vii. 14.)

" And Mary replied to the angel, O thou
" heavenly messenger, permit me to ask, How
" can this possibly be from this time, as thou
" has intimated to me, since I am as yet a
" virgin?

* That divinity is implied in the name Jesus, and that it corresponds in meaning with Immanuel, is proved by Bishop Pearson, in his Exposition of the Apostle's Creed, Art. ii.

"And the angel answering, said unto her, "There is nothing in that objection, great as it "may seem; for this whole affair is to be a "scene of miracles. The Holy Spirit shall come "upon thee, and the power of the most high "God shall thus overshadow thee by an amazing "energy, to produce an effect hitherto, from the "foundation of the earth, unknown. And there-"fore that holy offspring of thine shall, with "regard to this miraculous conception, as well "as to another and yet greater consideration, "be called the Son of God. And behold, to "confirm thy faith in a declaration which might "seem so incredible, I further assure thee, that "thy cousin Elizabeth also hath, by the mira-"culous power of God, conceived a son, though "she be now in her old age; and this is the "sixth month of pregnancy with her, who hath "long been called barren, and spoken of as one "who could have no hope of being a mother. "And scruple not to believe what I have told "thee, with regard to thyself as well as her; "for well thou knowest that nothing is or ever "will be impossible to God, whose almighty "power operates with equal ease in the most "miraculous as in the most common productions.

"And strange as the message was, Mary firmly "believed it, and said with the most amiable "humility and piety, Behold I am the handmaid "of the Lord, and would approve myself faith-"ful and obedient: may it be unto me according "to thy word! I thankfully accept the honour, "of which I confess I am unworthy; and hum-"bly resign my reputation, and even my life, to "the divine care and providence, while I wait "the accomplishment of thy prediction.

"Then the angel, having executed his om-

" mission, departed from her, and returned to his " abode in the heavenly regions*."

On the event that hath been described our church builds her collect for this day. And surely this marvellous instance of divine mercy and condescension is worthy of being commemorated by us. " That Christ should die, when he " was a man, was a thing of natural conse- " quence: but that when he was God, he should " be willing to be made man, and condescended " to humble himself beyond all imagination and " conception; this is indeed wonderful and " astonishing in the highest degree. In admira- " tion of this, St. Paul, as it were in a rapture, " says, ' Without controversy great is the mys- " ' tery of godliness, God was manifest in the " ' flesh†,' ". Every circumstance relative to the incarnation of the Son of God ought to be deeply imprinted on our memories, to excite the liveliest gratitude in our hearts, and on every mention of it to draw from our lips new hosannas. And the circumstance this day commemorated, conducive as it is to the honour of our Lord, and to the confirmation of our faith in his divinity, ought to be remembered in the church, so long as the church remains, that is, for ever and ever.

On the annunciation of our blessed Lord's " incarnation by the message of an angel," which is mentioned in our collect as a subject for gratitude and thanksgiving, is founded a prayer for the infusion of divine " grace into our hearts." Hereby we are taught the inefficacy of the mere report, though salvation be its subject, and an angelic envoy the channel of its communication,

* Doddridge's Paraphrase.

† St. Chrys. Hom. 31, *De Bapt. Christi*, tom. v. p. 467.

to the important purpose of awakening a saving faith in our bosoms without the superadded exertion of almighty power. Thousands hear the message, and seemingly entertain no doubt of its veracity, but give only an historical credit to the fact: they make no application of the truth, thus announced, to their own consciences. They infer not from the awakening consideration of our Lord's incarnation their own guilty and helpless state; a deduction which, it might be supposed, could not be overlooked. And therefore they are not excited to apply to him for an actual participation of pardoning and sanctifying mercy. "They believe in vain," according to the Apostle's awful hypothesis, 1 Cor. xv. 2, of which if there had been no danger, the same inspired writer would not have besought the Corinthians "not to receive the grace of God "in vain." Our collect plainly implies what our homilies strongly assert, that a belief which is the mere creature of reason, and unaccompanied with a renewing influence on the heart, is not that faith to which salvation is annexed*.

The incarnation of Christ is itself a most marvellous instance of divine grace, and the grand link in the chain of causes on which our salvation is suspended. All the various means which divine wisdom has chosen for the purpose of promulgating its salvation, are also acts of rich grace shewn to our fallen race. But were not additional favour conferred on us, all these means would leave us in the same wretched condition in which they found us. For though "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the "word of God," as the instrumental cause;

* See the Homily of Faith, Part i.

the efficient cause of genuine faith is the grace of God. It is his power alone which can rouse us to sensibility, subvert the fabric of self-righteousness which we have erected, and exhibit to our view the person and work of Christ so as to convince us of his ability and willingness to save us. His grace alone can enable us so to trust in the death and passion of Christ, as to entertain a hope of being "brought to the "glory of his resurrection."

The "incarnation" of Christ was preparatory to "his cross and passion." He was born to die; for it was by his death only that atonement could be made for human guilt, and so a way be opened for our resurrection to glory. When our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, is exhibited in Scripture as the object of faith, his "cross and passion" are generally referred to. "I determined," saith St. Paul to the Corinthians, "to know nothing among you, save Jesus "Christ and him crucified." And in his epistle to the Galatians he exclaims, "God forbid that "I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord "Jesus Christ." Though his incarnation, birth, and the several acts of his meritorious life, are constituent parts of the aggregate which forms the basis of our hope; yet his "cross and pas-"sion" were the concluding and prominent acts of his gracious work, the crisis of redemption: To this, therefore, our collect leads our attention, though its more immediate subject is a circumstance that preceded the incarnation. In the cross of Christ all the rays of divine mercy and of human hope meet as in their focus. This is the point of convergence, to which all the designs and counsels of the Godhead, and all

all the sensibilities of the believing soul, invariably tend.

The cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is exclusively the meritorious cause of man's salvation:—exclusively, not of the preparatory acts of the Son of God, but of human merit. To Calvary, therefore, is our attention directed by our collect. Thither we are to look for the hope of being "brought unto the glory "of our Lord's resurrection." For there alone is that to be discovered which can remove guilt from the conscience, introduce peace in its stead, and reconcile the heart to God. From thence alone are those motives to be derived, which, while they exhibit sin in its proper light as a hideous monster of deformity, and sicken the soul at the sight of its ghastly foe, its murtherous inmate; at the same time excite the believing sinner to "put off the old man which is corrupt "according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on "the new man, which after God is created in "righteousness and true holiness." From thence only can we derive either a title to the inheritance of the saints in light, or the needful qualifications for its enjoyment. Conviction and conversion, sanctification and conservation, power to resist temptation, and victory over death, are surely and only to be obtained from the "cross and "passion" of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The air of Calvary is vivifying and salubrious. It restores the dead to life, the sick to health.

But what is the final object of our prayer? It is that which is the consummation of all the desires and hopes of the regenerate soul; "that "we may be brought to the glory of Christ's "resurrection." He suffered and died that he

might arise from the dead to a glorious life as the head and first fruits of his body the church. And all those who, through faith in him, die to the law, to sin, and to the world, shall be partakers of that glorious life. Their bodies, like his body, must descend into the grave. But, after his example, and by virtue of his resurrection, they shall rise again, be made like unto his glorious body, and, reanimated by their redeemed souls, enjoy that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which his cross and passion have procured for them. Soon those celestial envoys, one of whom announced to the Virgin mother the incarnation of the divine Redeemer, of whom a multitude celebrated his nativity, all of whom rejoice "over every sinner that repenteth," and who are "ministering spirits sent forth to "minister unto the heirs of salvation;" shall receive our departing souls into their friendly arms, and carry them to Abraham's bosom. And ere long, one of them shall sound the shrill trumpet, whose notes shall reach the mansions of the dead, and awaken the sleeping tenants of the grave. He will announce that our redemption, in all its fulness, is arrived; and, accompanied by myriads of his shining companions, will conduct the redeemed into the presence of their Lord, that they may hear their joyous sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the "kingdom prepared for you from the beginning "of the world." They will throw open the everlasting gates of the celestial city, that "the "King of glory, the Lord of hosts, the Lord "mighty in battle," victorious over all his enemies, may enter through it, attended by his grateful and raptured train. Then "the ran-"somed of the Lord shall return and come to

"Zion with songs, and everlasting joy on their "heads: they shall receive joy and gladness, and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away" for ever.

O glorious prospect! O blissful hope! May it inspire our souls with new energies. May it be the means of exciting us to offer up our prayer for a copious effusion of divine influence on our hearts, and to urge with vigour the plea which our collect has suggested for its attainment, "beseeching God to pour his grace into "our hearts; that as we have known the incar- "nation of our Lord Jesus Christ by the message "of an angel; so by his cross and passion we "may be brought unto the glory of his resur- "rection, through the same Jesus Christ our "Lord. Amen."

ST. MARK'S DAY.

O Almighty God, who hast instructed thy holy church with the heavenly doctrine of thy Evangelist St. Mark: give us grace, that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of thy holy Gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE blessings which are communicated to mankind by the ministry of the Gospel are unspeakably great, as we are reminded by the epistle annexed to our present collect. Therein (Eph. iv. 11–16) St. Paul informs us that our divine Redeemer, after that he had "ascended up far "above all heavens that he might fill all things,— "gave some, Apostles; and some, prophets; and "some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teach- "ers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the "work of the ministry, for the edifying of the "body of Christ: till we all come in the unity "of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son "of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure "of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we "henceforth be no more children tossed to and "fro, and carried about with every wind of doc- "trine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craf- "tiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; "but speaking (or rather maintaining) the truth "in love, may grow up into him in all things, "which is the head, even Christ: from whom

" the whole body fitly joined together, and com-
" pacted by that which every joint supplieth,
" according to the effectual working in the mea-
" sure of every part, maketh increase of the body
" unto the edifying of itself in love." Of the mercy which hath thus been shewn to the church she preserves a grateful remembrance, by a commemoration of those inspired persons, through whom the precious stream of revelation hath flowed, and from whom the commission of her king has been derived to her ministers in a long succession.

The Evangelist St. Mark, though his name is evidently Roman, and was probably assumed on occasion of his visiting Italy and Rome, was doubtless of Jewish extraction, and descended from the tribe of Levi in the line of the Priesthood. He is said to have been the son of St. Peter's sister; and is to be distinguished from John, sirnamed Mark, the son of Mary, and from Mark who was sister's son to Barnabas. He is supposed to have been converted to the Christian faith by one of the Apostles, and probably by St. Peter; since he was the constant attendant of that Apostle in his travels, his amanuensis and interpreter. He accompanied St. Peter in his apostolical progress, preached the Gospel in Italy and at Rome; where, at the request of the Roman Christians, he composed and wrote his Gospel.

By St. Peter our Evangelist was sent to plant Christianity in Egypt. He fixed his chief residence in Alexandria and its environs, where multitudes both of men and women, were converted to the faith by his preaching. But he did not confine his labours to the oriental parts of Egypt: for he removed westward to Lybia,

Marmorica, Pentapolis, and other countries; where his preaching and miracles were the means of converting many to the faith, with whom he stayed till he had confirmed them in the profession of the truth. Returning to Alexandria he preached freely for some time, regulated the newly-formed church, and wisely provided for a succession by constituting governors and pastors therein. But the restless enemy of the souls of men would not suffer him to be long quiet. For, at the time of Easter, when the great solemnities of Serapis were celebrated, and the minds of the people were excited to a passionate vindication of their idol's honour, they broke in upon St. Mark, who was then engaged in the solemn celebration of divine worship. They seized him, bound his feet with cords, dragged him through the streets, and the most craggy places, to the Bucelus, a precipice near the sea, and for that night thrust him into prison, where his soul was encouraged by a divine vision under the tortures of his shattered body. On the following morning the tragedy recommenced, and he was dragged about in the same manner, till through bruises and loss of blood he expired. He outlived St. Peter and St. Paul, and is supposed to have suffered about the end of the reign of Nero.

His Gospel, the only book which he left behind him, was written at the entreaty of the converts at Rome, who, not contented to have heard the Gospel from the lips of St. Peter, requested his disciple St. Mark, to commit to writing an historical account of what the Apostle had delivered to them. This our Evangelist performed in the Gospel which bears his name, with faithfulness and brevity. St. Peter is said

to have perused the narrative, to have ratified it by his authority, and to have commanded it to be read in the public assemblies of the Roman church. It was frequently styled St. Peter's Gospel; not so much because dictated by him to St. Mark, as because the Evangelist composed it chiefly from those discourses which St. Peter usually delivered to the people. St. Chrysostom has observed, that St. Mark delights, in his style and manner of expression, to imitate St. Peter, representing much in a few words. Though he commonly reduces the story of our Saviour's acts into a narrower compass than St. Matthew, yet there are passages in which he is more diffuse. The impartiality of his narrative appears from hence, that, so far from concealing the shameful lapse of St. Peter, his beloved tutor and master, he mentions some particular circumstances and aggravations which the other Evangelists have omitted.

"So far as may be judged by comparing the "Gospels of Mark and Matthew, the first is an "abridgment of the second. Mark often uses "the same terms, relates the same facts, and "notices the same circumstances. He some-"times adds particulars, which give great light "to St. Matthew's text. There are also two or "three miracles in Mark, which are not in "Matthew. (See Mark i. 23; and chap. v. ix. "xvi.) What is most remarkable is, that, though "he follows Matthew in almost every thing else, "yet he forsakes him in the order of his narra-"tion, from chap. iv. 12, to chap. xiv. 13, of "Matthew. In these places he follows the "order of time as noted by Luke and John. "This has induced chronologers to follow Luke, "Mark, and John, rather than Matthew. He

" begins his Gospel with the preaching of John " the Baptist, and omits several parables related " by St. Matthew, chap. xx. xxi. and xxv.; and " several discourses of our Saviour to his disciples " and to the Pharisees. (Chap. v. vi. vii. xvi. " xviii.*)"

The collect, appointed for St. Mark's day, contains a preface and a prayer. The preface records the divine mercy which hath been shewn to the church by the instrumentality of this Evangelist;—and the prayer implores grace that we may duly improve it.

The Alexandrian Christians, and those of many other countries, were deeply indebted to divine goodness, for the personal ministry of this eminent man. But not only had they a cause for thankfulness in the recollection of St. Mark, for his memorial is justly blessed among us also: and that not merely on their account whom his oral testimony was the means of turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; but also on our own, since we also are " enlightened with his heavenly doctrine," to whom " he, being dead, yet speaketh."

Who can sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in raising up different men, in different places and on different occasions, to commit to writing those facts on which our salvation depends; in qualifying them for the important work by the inspiration of his Spirit; and in preserving their narratives for our use, on whom the ends of the world are come? Had one historian only been employed, the narrative would have been more liable to suspicion. But

* Calmet's Dictionary. See a lively description of St. Mark's style and character of writing in Blackwell's Sacred Classics, vol. i. p. 291, &c.

"in the mouth of two or three witnesses every "word is established;" and we have more than the number required for legitimate evidence. Had there been a perfect accordance in style, in chronology, in the facts and sayings recited, it might have been said (for what will not infidelity allege to discredit the word of God?) that the witnesses had consulted together, or that their testimonies were verbal copies of each other. But the varieties that prevail in the several Evangelists plainly evince that there was no plot to deceive formed among them; the evidence of each is thereby marked with credibility; and the whole narrative is a four-fold cord which cannot be broken,—a cable, held by which the vessel of the church will ride out every storm which may be raised against her.

The doctrine of St. Mark is justly characterised in our collect as heavenly doctrine; for it is the history of him, and a record of his instructions both by word and deed, who came down from heaven, and who is the only guide that can conduct us thither. It is a stream of light issuing from the throne of God, and opening a vista through the darkness that envelops our nether world, which attracts and directs the pilgrim's feet towards the source of its derivation.

That the doctrine of St. Mark and of the other Evangelists is "heavenly," or "given by "inspiration of God," appears clearly both by its *external* and *internal* evidences.

The *external* evidence is such as can never be overthrown. That the books of the New Testament were written soon after our Lord's ascension, and by the persons whose names they bear, is unquestionable. For they are all mentioned by very early writers. Both the preachers and the

writers of the *facts* therein recorded shew that they could not be deceived themselves: because they relate what they had seen with their own eyes, and heard with their own ears. This, however, was the case with respect only to two of the Evangelists; but the other two have recited what they heard immediately from eye and ear witnesses. They proved their veracity, and shewed incontestibly that they did not invent the story which they related, by their patient submission to every species of torment in its defence, "not loving their lives unto the death." The *facts* recorded in the New Testament being thus established, afford an attestation to the divine authority of the *doctrines* which they were wrought to confirm; many of them being such miraculous acts as no man could do unless God were with him. (See Mark xvi. 30; John iii. 2; x. 25.)

The *internal* evidence which attests the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures consists of proofs, derivable from themselves, that none but God could have been their author. They arise —from the tendency of the whole—from the harmony of the different parts—and from that luminous display of excellency which arrests the attention of every humble inquirer after truth.

The general tendency of the doctrines of the Scriptures indicates their divine original. They exhibit to us the state in which man was at first created, as crowned with purity and perfection both natural and moral. They teach us that he is now a sinful, helpless, and miserable creature; and shew how his deplorable fall was originally occasioned. They reveal to us what he must become in order to be happy, even pardoned and sanctified. They likewise explain how this change

must be produced: that it must be the effect of God's mercy through faith in Jesus Christ, and of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. The result is pointed out, even peace and consolation here, and eternal happiness hereafter. Now, *from the nature of these doctrines,* it is evident that they are of divine original. For such a system never did, nor could, enter into the heart of man untaught of God. That it never *did,* is plain from the writings of the most learned Philosophers. And that it never *could,* appears from the singular nature of the things themselves. Man, uninstructed, unhumbled, and unrenewed, *would* never have contrived a scheme of religion, that tends to debase his pride, gives unto God the whole glory of salvation, and requires the crucifixion of every earthly appetite. This is fully demonstrated by the dislike which the carnal mind has always manifested to the Gospel scheme, its proneness to explain away its genuine doctrines, and the opposition which they have always received on the part of infidelity. So that the deist himself, in his rejection of the Bible, is a collateral witness to its divine authority. (See 1 Cor. i. 18; ii. 7–10. 12.)

That none but God could be the author of the Scriptures, appears further from the harmony of the different writers in different ages of the world and in distant places, all united to illustrate and confirm each other. What the prophets *foretell,* the writers of the New Testament record to have *actually come to pass.* The prophets could not so minutely have described future events, unless they had been taught of God. The inconsistencies which have been charged on the book of God arise chiefly from the ignorance and perverseness of those who make the objections;

many of whom, (particularly Thomas Paine, as appears from his own confession) never attentively read the volume which they pretend to criticise; and all of whom refuse to implore, and therefore are destitute of, that divine illumination, without which the Scriptures cannot be understood*.

There is also a certain luminous display of divine authority and superlative excellency in the Scriptures, which arrests the attention of every humble inquirer after truth. This, however, is only discoverable by divine illumination, which is spoken of and promised in the Bible. (Col. i. 9; Eph. i. 17, 18; Jer. xxxi. 33; 1 Cor. ii. 14.) For this our church teaches us to pray†. A man must have within himself those dispositions of which the Scriptures speak, before he can perceive this internal evidence of their truth. A man who has no taste for the fine arts of music and painting is totally disqualified for criticising the performances of professional practitioners. Cast pearls before swine, and we know the consequences. It is not at all a surprising phœnomenon that the proud philosopher, the sensualist, and the worldling, should agree to treat the oracles of God both with neglect and contempt. But the sincere Christian finds himself burdened with that corrupt body of sin which the Scriptures describe and trace to its origin. He discovers a divine *excellency* and *suitability* in Christ and his salvation as a

* It is admitted that the faults of transcribers, and our imperfect knowledge of the Hebrew language, and of the customs of the East, may have occasioned some real or apparent, though trivial, inaccuracies.

† See the collect for the Second Sunday in Advent, vol. i. p. 277, &c. See also our present collect.

remedy for the disorders which he feels in himself. He "*tastes* and *sees* that the Lord is "gracious," in that rest and peace which he derives from believing. The exactness with which the moral disease of his soul, in all its various symptoms, is described; the nature of the medicine which is prescribed for the cure of the complicated disorder in the understanding, will, and affections, under which he labours, and the actual experience of the powerful effect of this balm of Gilead, leave no doubt on his mind whether God be the author of the inestimable discovery or not, but convince him that the doctrine of the Gospel is "heavenly doctrine."

O how animated should our gratitude be for the instruction which the church derives from the "heavenly doctrine" of the Evangelists! If we consider what was the state of our own country previous to that instruction, and what is the state of other countries now which are destitute of it—if we contemplate the indispensable necessity of that instruction to the present peace and future felicity of our own souls;—our hearts will be inflamed with love to God, while his love to us is revived in our recollection by the recurrence of those days which we have consecrated to the memory of its instruments.

The prayer of our collect implores grace that we may duly improve the blessing which hath been conferred on us. It supposes that all those who join therein, have received the Gospel history as the record of truth, and embrace the doctrines which arise out of it. But it also supposes that there are many persons in every branch of the visible church, who are like "bruised reeds and smoking flax."

The petition of our collect alludes to the pas-

sage of St. Paul's writings, which is used as the epistle for the day, and which hath been already cited. (Eph. iv. 11–16.) The end proposed by the Gospel is the reduction of the heart to "the "obedience of faith," and its establishment therein. But growth in grace, like growth in bodily stature, is a gradual work. Maturity is not attained at once. There are, therefore, in every Christian society children, as well as young men, and fathers in Christ. Young converts are often, like children, weak in judgment, and wavering in their adherence to the truth. And it would be well if debility and inconstancy were confined to those persons who have newly adopted a profession of Christianity. But we see, alas! that many who have long named the name of Christ, are still in an infantile state. It may be well for every reader to inquire, whether his views of truth be not imperfect, his convictions slight, his desires languid, his purposes faint, and his endeavours feeble—whether he do not need "grace" "that he may be esta- "blished in the truth of God's holy Gospel," that his faith may be confirmed, his hope enlivened, his love rendered pure and fervid. He must be ignorant indeed, who can suppose that he hath "already attained and is already per- "fect," and that therefore he hath no need of joining, with a view to his own benefit, in the petition of our present collect.

We compare ourselves in our confession to a ship that is tossed to and fro on the boisterous waves, or to a light cloud that is carried about by the winds. In a greater or less degree these mortifying comparisons will be found to be applicable to every conscious sinner, who contemplates his own state in the light of the divine

word and Spirit. For if our judgments be happily established in the belief of all the fundamental articles of the faith, yet in the practical use of Christian doctrine how often and easily are we shaken in mind! For who is there that, at all times, maintains the peace of his conscience, the hope of salvation, and purity of heart and conduct, without interruption? Who is there that, like the rooted oak, can always withstand the "blast of vain doctrine," with which men and devils are permitted to assault him? Who, that needs not to be more deeply "rooted in "Christ, stablished and built up in him?"

God is pleased, for wise purposes, to suffer the faith of his people to be tried by "blasts of vain "doctrine." In the propagation of error much zeal and artifice are employed. The methods of imposture to which Satan and his agents have recourse, are very subtle*, and not easily detected. To oppose their sophisms uniformly and effectually, requires that the mind be well furnished with Scripture doctrine and Christian experience.

It is therefore our duty and interest to study the "holy Gospel" daily, and to furnish ourselves with weapons of defence from its armoury. But the most critical acquaintance with its contents is not of itself sufficient; we must also pray for "grace that our hearts may be established" both in the truth of the facts which it records, and also in a cordial acquaintance with those inferences from the facts on which our comfort and holiness depend. Without divine teaching, the historical facts may be credited, and yet the necessary deductions be overlooked. O let the Scriptures be

* See Blackwall's Sacred Classics, vol. i. p. 232, 233, third edition.

our continual study! And let us study them on our knees, imploring instruction from above! that we may grow up from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood: "that, maintaining "the truth in love, we may grow up into him in "all things who is the head, even Christ; from "whom the whole body fitly joined together, "and compacted by that which every joint sup- "plieth, according to the effectual working in "the measure of every part, maketh increase of "the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES'S DAY.

O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life; Grant us perfectly to know thy Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life; that following the steps of thy holy Apostles, Saint Philip and Saint James, we may stedfastly walk in the way that leadeth to everlasting life, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WE are this day required to commemorate the mercy of God to his church manifested in calling to the Apostolate, and in qualifying for that high office, two eminent men, St. Philip and St. James. Each of these names belonged to two different persons among the officers of the primitive church. There were two Philips, one an Apostle and the other a deacon; to the former of whom this day is dedicated. There were also two persons who bore the name of James; both of them Apostles, but distinguished by the epithets of the greater and the less, either on account of a difference in stature, or in age. It is the latter of these, St. James the less, who was the brother of our Lord (being, as is supposed, a son of Joseph by a former wife, or, as others maintain, the son of Mary, sister to our Lord's mother,) the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and who was honoured by his cotemporaries with the title of *the Just*, whose memory is this day recorded in the church.

St. Philip was born at Bethsaida, a town near the sea of Tiberias, "the city of Andrew and "Peter." Of his parentage and way of life the history of the Gospel takes no notice; but probably he was a fisherman, that being the general occupation of his native place. He had the honour of being first called to the discipleship. For our Lord soon after his return from the wilderness, having parted from Andrew and Peter after a short conversation with them, as he was passing through Galilee, on the very next day, found Philip, whom he commanded to "follow him." This was the usual mode which he adopted in selecting and appropriating those who were to be his stated attendants. The prerogative, therefore, of the primary vocation evidently belongs to Philip. For though Andrew and Peter first conversed with Christ, yet they returned again to their secular business, and were not called to the discipleship till more than a year afterwards, when John the Baptist had been cast into prison. As Philip had seen no miracle performed by his Master for the eviction of his Messiahship, we may suppose that a peculiar measure of divine grace accompanied the outward call, "Follow me;" whereby Philip was convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the person pointed out by ancient prophecy, of whose appearance a general expectation was now raised among the Jews.

No sooner had religion taken possession of St. Philip's mind, than, like an active principle, it began to ferment and to diffuse itself. He soon after met with Nathaniel, a person of note and eminence, acquainted him with the glad tidings of the newly found Messiah, and conducted him to Jesus. Every good man is anxious to draw

and direct others in the same way to happiness which he himself hath discovered. After St. Philip's call to the Apostleship, very little is recorded of him in the sacred story. It was to him, however, that our Saviour proposed the question, What they should do for so much bread in the wilderness as would feed the vast multitude which was gathered together? to which our Apostle answered, that a sufficiency was not easily to be obtained; not considering that to feed two individual persons, or twenty thousand, is equally easy to almighty power when God chooses to exert it. (John vi. 5.) It was to St. Philip also that the Gentile proselytes who came up to Jerusalem at the passover, applied for information, being desirous of seeing Jesus, a person of whom they had heard so great things. (John xii. 22.) It was with him that our Lord, a little before the last paschal supper, held that discourse concerning himself, which is recorded, John xiv. 8, &c. and to which our collect refers. The compassionate Jesus had been engaged in fortifying the minds of his disciples with suitable consolation against the time of his departure from them. He had told them that he was going to prepare room for them in the mansions of the blessed—that he himself was "the way, the truth, and the life," and that "no man could come to the Father but "by him;" and that, knowing him, "they both "knew and had seen the Father." Philip, not duly understanding the force of our Lord's assertions, besought him to "shew them the Father," which would abundantly convince and satisfy their minds. We can hardly suppose that he had such gross conceptions of the Deity as to imagine the Father to be vested with a corporeal

and visible nature. But as Christ had told them that they had seen the Father, and as the Apostle knew that God was often wont to appear of old in a visible shape, he seems to have only desired that he would manifest himself to them in the same way. Our Lord gently reproved the ignorance of his disciple, because, after so long an attendance on his instructions, Philip did not know that Jesus himself was the image of his Father, the express characters of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, appearing in him, of which his miracles were luminous evidences.

In the distribution of the several regions of the world, which was made by the Apostles, it appears that the upper Asia was the province of St. Philip. There he applied himself with indefatigable diligence and industry to recover men out of the snare of the devil, and to bring them to an acknowledgment of the truth which is after godliness. By his laborious preaching and miraculous powers, accompanied with divine influence, he became the instrument of converting great numbers to the Christian faith.

Having for many years successfully managed his apostolic office throughout his district, St. Philip came, in the last stage of his life, to Hierapolis, a city of Phrygia, a city rich and populous, but answering to its name in its idolatrous devotions. Here, by fervent prayer and earnest exhortation, he turned many of the inhabitants from the worship of a serpent which the city adored. In consequence of this the magistrates seized him, and, having thrown him into prison, caused him to be severely scourged. After this preparatory act of cruelty, they led him to execution, and having bound him, according to some accounts, hanged him up by the

neck against a pillar, or, according to others, crucified him.

Having thus sketched an outline of St. Philip's life, we proceed to that of St. James the less, who is associated with him in the commemoration of our church. Of the place where St. James was born, the sacred story gives no information, nor what was his employment previous to his call to the discipleship. Indeed, we have no distinct account of him during our Saviour's life. But after the resurrection he was favoured with a particular interview with his Lord, as we find from what St. Paul says, 1 Cor. xv. 7, though the Evangelists have not mentioned it. After Christ's ascension, he was chosen Bishop of Jerusalem, being preferred before the rest on account of his relationship to the great Head of the church. To him St. Paul addressed himself after his conversion, and by him was honoured with the right hand of fellowship. (Gal. i. 19; and ii. 9.) To him St. Peter sent the news of his miraculous deliverance from prison, saying, "Go, shew these things "unto James and to the brethren," (Acts xii. 17,) that is, to the whole church, and to St. James its bishop and pastor. Our Apostle, moreover, appears to have been the chief person in the synod, which was held at Jerusalem for the determination of the great controversy concerning the supposed duty of the Gentile converts to observe the Mosaic rites. For after that the case had been opened by St. Peter, and further debated by St. Paul and St. Barnabas, St. James stood up to pass the final decretory sentence*,

* Διο εγω κρινω. "Wherefore I thus judge or decide "the matter."

that the Gentile converts were not to be troubled with the bondage of the Jewish yoke.

St. James presided over the mother-church at Jerusalem for a considerable time. "His martyrdom took place about the year 62, and his "epistle was published a little before his death. "As he always resided at Jerusalem, and was "providentially preserved through various persecutions, he had an opportunity of overcoming "even enmity itself, and of abating prejudice "against Christianity in some measure. The "name of *Just* was generally given him on account of his singular innocence and integrity. "And as he conformed to Jewish customs with "more than occasional regularity, he was by no "means so odious in the eyes of his countrymen "as the Apostle of the Gentiles. But he could "not fully have overcome the enmity, and at the "same time have been faithful to Christ. Many "Jews respected the man, and admired the fruits "of the Gospel in him. But the root and principle was still their abhorrence; and from the "account of Eusebius, the testimony of Hegesippus an early Christian historian whom he quotes, "and of Josephus, it is plain that it was thought "a pitiable thing that so good a man should be "a Christian. Paul's escape from Jewish malice "by appealing to Cæsar had sharpened the spirits "of the people; and they were determined to "wreak their vengeance on James, who was "merely a Jew and could plead no Roman exemptions. Festus dying president of Judea, "before his successor Albinus arrived, Ananias "the high priest, a Sadducee and a merciless "persecutor, held the supreme power in the "interim; and having called a council, before it "he brought James with some others, accusing

" them of breaking the law of Moses. But it " was not easy to procure his condemnation, for " his holy life had long obtained the veneration " of his countrymen.

" The great men were uneasy on account of " the vast increase of Christian converts by his " means, and endeavoured to entangle him by " persuading him to mount a pinnacle of the " Temple, and to speak to the people assembled " at the time of the passover against Christianity. " James being placed aloft, delivered a bold con- " fession of Jesus, as then sitting at the right " hand of power, and as shortly coming in the " clouds of heaven. Upon this Ananias and the " rulers were highly incensed. To disgrace his " character was their first intention. This had " failed. To murder his person was the next; " and the attempt was of much more easy execu- " tion. Crying out that Justus himself was " seduced, they threw him down and stoned " him. The Apostle had strength to fall on his " knees, and to pray, ' I beseech thee, Lord God " ' and Father, for them; for they know not " ' what they do.' One of the priests, moved " with the scene, cried out, ' Cease! what do " ' you mean? This just man is praying for you.' " A person present with a fuller's club beat out " his brains, and completed his martyrdom*."

The collect appointed for the day in which we commemorate St. Philip and St. James, consists of—a preface—a petition—and the end proposed by the request which is made.

The preface of our collect addresses God as almighty, and ascribes everlasting life to the

* Milner's History of the Church of Christ, vol. i. page 114-116.

true knowledge of him; herein alluding to the declaration of our Lord, (John xvii. 3,) "This "is life eternal to know thee the only true God, "and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

The subject, to which the introduction of our collect leads our attention, is no speculative point, of which a man may be ignorant without personal loss, or with which he may be acquainted without personal advantage. For what Moses said of the instruction which he gave to the Israelites, may be repeated respecting this divine science,—"It is not a vain thing for "you: because it is your life." Deut. xxxii. 47. The importance of this divine science, and the impossibility of attaining it without divine instruction, manifest the necessity of a divine revelation, which was afforded to man so soon as he was created, was renewed on the fall with those additions which that event required to be made, was prefixed to the Decalogue, and repeated at divers times and in divers manners by a long train of inspired messengers, was explained by hieroglyphics, and at length completed in the person of him who is "the "image of the invisible God, the brightness of "his glory, and the express image of his person." The severity of divine threatenings against all who corrupt this knowledge is accounted for by the declaration of our Lord, that it is "life "eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus "Christ whom he hath sent."

Now that the bare knowledge of a first cause, (and how much more of his mode of subsistence and moral attributes!) could only be derived from a revelation, is evident from this consideration, that such a revelation has been made; for God doth nothing in vain. And notwithstand-

ing the boasted powers of reason, in favour of which the advocates for natural religion are so vociferous, the revelation of God made to man has repeatedly been corrupted and mercifully renewed: and, if we may believe the historian of America, Robertson, in some instances every trace of it has been wiped from the human memory; for he tells of some hordes of Indians, discovered by the Spaniards, who had no conception of any intellectual being besides themselves. Oh! what thanks do we not owe to him for that felicitating knowledge, which the introduction of our collect celebrates!

Surely, while we inquire what that divine science is, to which "eternal life" is annexed and confined, reverence and godly fear, holy desire and ardent expectation, mingled with deep humility, should reign in all our hearts.

Is the reader seeking happiness? It is not to be found in the knowledge of worldly pleasure, riches, or honours; human arts and sciences all say, It is not in us. All these things may be known without any increase of happiness, or be unknown without any deprivation or diminution thereof. The knowledge of God is the only beatific knowledge.

Jehovah is described as "the only true God," in the passage of Scripture to which our collect alludes; but not for the purpose of distinguishing the Father from the Son and Spirit, for the three co-equal and co-eternal persons are the one true and living God. The Son is called "the true "God and eternal life" (1 John, v. 20): and the Holy Ghost is described as a person in the godhead in the seventh verse of the same chapter. But this mode of diction is employed in order to distinguish the Jehovah of the Bible from all

idols, whether the factitious creatures of human hands, or the vain chimeras of human imagination. The object of Unitarian homage, nay, the object of homage professed to be adored by all unconverted men, is as much an idol as the Diana of the Ephesians. For "the only true "God" is possessed of moral attributes, which no unconverted man understands and practically acknowledges. For he is holy, just, and true*.

It is essential to salvation that God be known as "in Christ, reconciling the world unto him-"self." For when the moral perfections of God are exhibited to the mind, no hope can arise but from the appointment of a divine Mediator. And no true knowledge of God can be derived to the soul, but in and through his incarnate Son. For his glory is only discernible as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, who, being "in the bosom of the Father, reveals him" to us. No where but under the atoning cross can any correct views of God, as holy, just, and good, be obtained. If the reader have never stood where beloved John stood, and seen by faith what John saw with his corporeal organs, he is unacquainted with "the only true God." For there only the evil of sin, the purity of the divine nature, and the ineffable mercy of Jehovah, are displayed. There the soul is laid prostrate in the dust, under a sense of its own guilt and vileness, and there the heart is captivated by the loving-kindness of the Lord.

"To know God is everlasting life." It is the foretaste of heavenly felicity, and the only and certain way which leads to it. O how seriously,

* See the Essay on the Second Collect in the Morning Service for Peace, vol. i. p. 129, &c.

then, should we inquire whether we know God or not; whether our knowledge be of that experimental and practical kind of which our collect speaks! whether it produce those effects, which constitute the incipient principle and evidential pledge of eternal life. These questions cannot be too closely addressed to the conscience; for to be destitute of the true knowledge of God is everlasting death, since divine vengeance will be executed on all "who know not God, and obey "not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. i. 8.

The petition of our collect is founded on the declaration of our blessed Lord, (John xiv. 6,) which occurred in a conversation with his disciples, to which we have before referred. Thereby he informed them, in answer to St. Philip's request that he would shew them the Father, that he, himself, is the way, the truth, and the life, and that "no man cometh unto the Father "but by him." Guided by this information, we beseech "Almighty God," that he would "grant us perfectly to know his Son Jesus "Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life."

Christ is the way in which we are to walk, the truth which we are to believe, and the life which we are to receive, and by which we are to be actuated. He is therefore "the alpha "and omega, the beginning and the ending," —the "ALL IN ALL," with respect to eternal salvation.

Christ is "the way" in which we are to walk. A way is a road that leads from one place to another. Metaphorically, it is the mean of transition from one state to another, or of attaining some end which is proposed. It supposes a point from which it begins, or whence the

traveller sets out on his journey, and a point at which it ends, or where the traveller arrives at the scope of his destination. Now, if we inquire what is the point of destination implied in our Lord's figurative declaration,—considered as a place, it is heaven; or as a state, it is a state of acceptance with God, of conformity to him, and of happiness in the enjoyment of him. Surely the importance and value of a way to this goal cannot be disputed. Let us contemplate it, till we become so fully conscious of it as cordially to follow it. If we consider the point of departure, it is this present evil world which lies on the brink of destruction.—It is a state of condemnation, pollution, and misery.

Our Lord says of himself, "I am *the* way"—not, I am a way, as if there were other roads to heaven and a man might choose which of them he liked best—but emphatically, "I am *the* "way." In the time of man's innocency indeed, before the fall, there was another way from a state of probation to a state of confirmation in holiness and happiness, even personal obedience. But when man became a sinner, this was for ever closed. God then graciously opened another, by faith in the atoning blood of his Son Jesus Christ. This way was revealed to our first parents immediately after the fall, was illustrated and explained by sacrifical rites, was kept open by the preaching of successive prophets, and at length was more completely exhibited to a lost world by the Gospel. Christ is a way in two respects,—by the merit of his blood, and by the purifying grace of his Spirit. For as the obstacles to our salvation were two-fold, guilt and pollution, his mediation removes both—the former by a satisfaction for sin, the latter by sanctifica-

tion from it. (Comp. Eph. ii. 13. 16. 18; Heb. x. 19, 20.) Let the reader inquire whether he be walking in this way. Is he seriously concerned about reconciliation with God, and anxious to obtain it? Is he convinced that "no man "cometh unto the Father but by Christ?" Is he seeking an interest in his blood, and the cleansing power of his grace?

Christ is moreover "the truth," in which we are to believe. Now truth, according to the meaning of the Hebrew term, is that which is worthy of dependence. Such is Christ. There is no danger of placing too much confidence in him, for he is the Rock of ages. He is "the "truth," as all divine truth has a relation to him and centres in him. In him, as their point of concurrence, all the doctrines of Scripture meet.

Christ is called "the truth" in opposition to shadows and to falsehood. The rites of the patriarchal and levitical dispensations were shadowy representations of him who is the substance. All their value and importance arose from their relation to him. They were of no use, except as they were the means of conducting the minds of sinners to him for salvation. But he is also "the truth," in opposition to falsehood under all its varied forms. Man, as a fallen creature, and having a greater or less degree of consciousness of being so, has foolishly employed his vain imagination from the earliest ages in contriving schemes of salvation for himself. From Cain, the first deist, to his disciples in the present day, innumerable errors have been broached on the subject of religion. The early heathens, however, were the least heterodox; for they knew the necessity of a mediator, and had

recourse to vicarious means of atonement. The Greeks and Romans deviated more widely from the original creed than their predecessors. But their modern imitators, whether Mohammedans, Hindoos, Papists, or Protestant self-justiciaries, have diverged further still by setting themselves up for their own saviours. As the truth, however, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for "ever," error is likewise, under different modifications, essentially the same. It is a system of self-righteousness. In this its patrons have all agreed from the beginning. The true believer, while he renounces self, which, considered as a foundation for hope towards God, is a lie, embraces "the truth;" for "Christ is in him the "hope of glory." The truth is therefore said "to dwell in him," and to "make him free." 2 John ii.; John viii. 32.

Christ is also "the life" which we are to receive, and by which we are to perform the functions of a living man. It is in vain that a way is set before us, and that truth is exhibited to our embrace, unless we are made alive from the dead. Now Christ, as our Creator and Preserver, is the author and supporter of corporeal life. "In him" as God "we live, and move, "and have our being." All life, vegetable or animal, human or angelic, is his gift. But in a peculiar sense he is the life of the believing soul. This consists in its union with God, and both its comfort and activity proceed from free communion with him. Christ is our life, as he is the medium of communion between us and God, by whom we are reconciled to him, and through whom we receive all spiritual communications from him. Christ is our life as he justifies by his blood, and quickens, sanctifies, and

glorifies by the agency of his Spirit. (Comp. John xv. 5; Col. iii. 4; John xi. 25; Gal. ii. 20.)

How anxiously should we inquire whether we be made alive by him! Hunger and thirst, the faculties of seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling, and the power of motion, are, corporeally or spiritually, symptoms and evidences of life. Can we adduce proof that we are quickened to newness of life?

Now we pray in our collect that we may perfectly know the Son of God Jesus Christ in these views which are given of him, that we may accurately understand the doctrine of the Gospel, that we may cordially embrace it, firmly rely on it, uniformly adorn it, and at length be conducted by it to everlasting life. It is not enough to have heard of Christ, nor to understand the theory of the Gospel. The conscious mind cannot be satisfied without an experimental and growing acquaintance with him. (Phil. iii. 7–14.)

The end proposed in our petition for the knowledge of Christ is, "that, following the "steps of the holy Apostles St. Philip and St. "James, we may stedfastly walk in the way "that leadeth to everlasting life, through the "same Jesus Christ our Lord."

These holy men, like their brother St. Paul, "determined to know nothing," as the foundation of their hope, the source of their comfort, or the subject of their preaching, "but Jesus "Christ and him crucified." Christ was their "all and in all." They walked in him as the way to everlasting life; and by stedfastly persevering therein, attained the object of their devout desire. They now enjoy everlasting life, and have "set us an example that we

" should follow their steps." No holiness as the means, and no happiness as the end, is to be attained without walking in the same way in which they walked, and that way is Christ.

But if we are treading in their steps, we shall be assailed by many temptations to deviate from their path. The allurements of the world, and the self-righteousness of our own bosoms, will try our fidelity to the utmost. In prosperity, outward or inward; in adversity, corporeal or spiritual, our stedfastness will be brought to the test. It is highly needful, therefore, that we should pray for persevering grace. He is unacquainted with the spiritual warfare, who doth not feel the propriety of our collect. O let us be " followers of them, who through faith and " patience inherit the promises!" Let us walk in the same way, and lean on the same support, praying earnestly to God that he would enable us to follow their steps, and make us co-heirs with them of everlasting life.

ST. BARNABAS THE APOSTLE.

O Lord God Almighty, who didst endue thy holy Apostle Barnabas with singular gifts of the Holy Ghost; leave us not, we beseech thee, destitute of thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them alway to thy honour and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE proper and primary name of that excellent man whom we now commemorate was Joses, which is the same as Joseph with a milder Greek termination. This was the name given him at his circumcision; to which after his conversion was added that of Barnabas by the Apostles, probably with a reference to those high qualifications for the ministerial office which he possessed, and which are spoken of in our collect. He was born in Cyprus, a celebrated island in the Mediterranean Sea, more memorable on account of our Apostle's nativity than of all its other advantages of soil and climate.

St. Barnabas was a descendant of the tribe of Levi in the line of the priesthood; which renders his conversion the more remarkable, since very few of the priests, comparatively, were, during our Lord's personal ministry, obedient to the faith, their prejudices in favour of Judaism being peculiarly strong. But nothing is impossible to the grace of God. The parents of our Apostle were both wealthy and pious, and at a proper age he was placed under the care of

Gamaliel at Jerusalem, to be instructed in the knowledge of the divine law. He is supposed to have been a contemporary with St. Paul in his studies; which circumstance might lay the foundation of that intimacy between these two Apostles which afterwards prevailed. We are further informed that St. Barnabas, being a frequent spectator of our Lord's miracles, was thereby convinced of his divinity, and induced to become his disciple, and that he was the means of persuading his sister Mary, the mother of Mark, to attend on the ministry of Christ. At her house he and his disciples often afterwards assembled, and there the last passover is said to have been celebrated. (Mark xiv. 13.)

He was one of the seventy disciples chosen by our Lord. And when the necessities of the church required pecuniary aid, he sold his patrimonial possessions in Cyprus, and laid the money at the Apostles' feet*.

What became of our Apostle immediately after the dispersion of the church on occasion of St. Stephen's martyrdom, we have no account. But we hear of him again after the conversion of St. Paul, whom he was the instrument of introducing to the Apostles, satisfying their minds respecting the reality of the divine change which the late bitter persecutor professed to have experienced. (Acts ix. 27.)

Shortly afterwards, when some Cyprian and Cyrenian converts, who had been driven from Jerusalem by the violence of persecution, had

* Dr. Cave seems to think, on the authority of St. Chrysostom, that Joseph called Barsabas, the fellow-candidate of Matthias for the Apostolate, was a different person from St. Barnabas.

successfully preached the Gospel in Antioch, St. Barnabas was sent by the college of Apostles to confirm this infant church in the faith and profession of Christianity. This service he performed with great zeal, fidelity, and delight; for when he "saw the grace of God, he was glad, "and exhorted them all that with purpose of "heart they would cleave to the Lord. For he "was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost "and of faith." Acts xi. 23, 24. The effect of his labours was great, for "much people was "added unto the Lord." But the work soon became too extensive for the conduct of a single individual. For the purpose, therefore, of furnishing himself with suitable assistance, our Apostle went to Tarsus, to inquire for St. Paul, who was lately come thither. Him he carried to Antioch, were both of them continued industriously ministering to the increase and establishment of the church for a whole year together. Here it was that the followers of Christ first received the honourable name of Christians*.

The faith of the Antiochians was signally operative. Warmed with the love of Christ and rejoicing in the prospect of heavenly treasures, they cheerfully contributed to the relief of the poor Christians in Judea who were distressed by a famine. Our Apostle, with his coadjutor Saul, was entrusted with the communication of this pious and charitable relief. Having discharged their trust, they returned back from Jerusalem to Antioch, bringing with them John surnamed

* Whether this name were assumed by the disciples, or imposed on them by others, is a question, on which learned men are at issue. Bishops Pearson, Benson, and Dr. Doddridge, are of the former opinion, which ecclesiastical history seems to favour. Mr. Milner inclines to the latter.

Mark, the son of Mary, sister to Barnabas; whose house was the sanctuary, where the church found both shelter for their persons, and convenience for the solemnities of their worship.

It is pleasant to ministers of the Gospel to labour among the faithful, encircled with sincere friends. And it is not every real saint who has the fortitude and charity to quit so agreeable a scene for the sake of breaking up new ground. How much longer St. Barnabas and St. Paul would have remained at Antioch, had they been left to themselves, we know not. But the Holy Ghost now called them to other labours. They obeyed the call; and having received their designation to this particular service by a solemn imposition of hands, accompanied with fasting and prayer, they departed. Seleucia in the neighbourhood was the first place to which they came; and from thence they sailed to the pleasant and pleasurable island of Cyprus. Here, methinks, the evil spirits who supported the religious rites and the sensual practices of the worship of Venus, began to tremble for this capital scene of their dominions.

From Salamis, the eastern point of the island, to Paphos the western, they spread the glad tidings of the Gospel. In this last place they found Elymas, a Jewish sorcerer, in company with Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor of the island, a man of sense and candour, who sent for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. The sorcerer endeavoured to prevent the good effects of their labours; till Paul, full of holy indignation at his diabolical malice, was enabled miraculously to strike him blind for a season. Sergius was "astonished," we are told,

" at the doctrine of the Lord," and commenced a Christian from that hour.

The two Apostles sailed now to the adjoining continent, and arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. And here John Mark, who had thus far attended them as their minister, left them and returned to Jerusalem. It was probably more agreeable to him to profess and practise Christianity at home with his mother and friends, than to expose himself to heathens. Even then traces of the love of the world were to be seen among Christians.

Pisidia, lying to the north of Pamphylia, was the next scene. Here was another Antioch, and the Apostles on the sabbath-day attended the Jewish synagogue. After the usual reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers gave them a friendly invitation to exhort the people, which St. Paul embraced with his usual zeal. His sermon is much in the same strain with those of St. Peter and St. Stephen, tending to beget in the hearers a conviction of sinfulness, and to give testimony to Jesus—concluding with a remarkably plain declaration of the grand doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ only, and a solemn warning against the dreadful consequences which follow hardness of heart and a contempt of the divine message. The Gentiles, powerfully impressed with the news, desired to hear more of the subject the next sabbath. Many Jews and proselytes were converted, and almost the whole city came together the next sabbath to hear the word of God. This sight roused the envy of the infidel Jews, who opposed Paul with all their might. The two Apostles boldly assured them, that though it was their duty to bring the news of salvation first to them;

yet as they despised God's gift of eternal life, they would now turn to the Gentiles, agreeably to the glorious prophecy of Isaiah, in which the experimental influence of the Gospel on Gentile hearts is plainly described. The Pagans, who were not so proud as the Jews, felt that they had no righteousness to plead before God, thankfully embraced the Gospel, and believed, in great numbers.

Pisidia was now full of the Gospel; and the Apostles proceeded with vast success, till a persecution excited by the Jews induced some self-righteous religious ladies, in conjunction with the magistrates, to drive them out of their coasts. From thence they came to Iconium, the northern extremity of the country; and the disciples whom they had left, though harrassed with persecution, were "filled with joy and the Holy Ghost." The internal consolation of their religion supported their souls. In Iconium the two Apostles continued a long time, and delivered the message of divine reconciliation with great freedom and energy, to the conversion of a great multitude both of Jews and Gentiles. Here the unbelieving Jews exerted their usual malevolence, and filled the Gentiles with the strongest prejudices against the Christians. Their conduct, though by no means uncommon, affords a dreadful instance of human depravity. It cannot be denied that these Jews must in religious knowledge have far surpassed the idolatrous inhabitants of Iconium. They held the unity of the Godhead, they worshipped Jehovah in their synagogue, and they heard his precepts from sabbath to sabbath out of the law of Moses and the Prophets. They must have known that the Messiah was foretold in the latter, and must have been acquainted with their duty both to God and man in many

respects by means of the former. Yet so unreasonable were they as to labour to prevent their Pagan neighbours from being instructed in any thing that deserved the name of religion, and to persecute with unceasing acrimony two of their own countrymen who agreed with them in the worship of the one living and true God, —of so little influence is what some call the "Unitarian" religion, if it be unconnected with the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. Persons who make it the whole of their religion, can, it seems, rather see mankind remain buried in the depths of the most senseless idolatry in worship, and of vicious profligacy in life, than brought over to the real Christian religion, the hearty renunciation of their own righteousness, and a humble dependence on the atoning blood of Jesus! The preaching of Paul and Barnabas excited a variety of speculations in this city. The Gentiles were divided, and part ranged themselves with the Jews, and part with the Apostles. But the former had the advantage for the present, because they were furnished with the arms of violence and persecution, which Christian soldiers can never use.

The Apostles, aware of their designs, fled into Lycaonia, a country to the east of Pisidia, and there preached the Gospel, particularly in Lystra and Derbe. In the former of these places a poor cripple, who had never enjoyed the use of his feet, heard St. Paul with the most respectful attention, and was so far wrought upon in his mind, as to believe that there was virtue in the name of Jesus Christ to heal him. To confirm him in his yet infant views of the Christian religion, to attest the truth, and to convince men that Jesus was both mighty and benevolent,

St. Paul was enabled by a word to restore the man to the full use of his limbs. Immediately these poor idolaters concluded, that the Gods were come down to them in the likeness of men. Through the whole country of Asia Minor the Greek literature, and with it the numerous fables of Hellenistic vanity, abounded. They had heard of Jupiter and Mercury particularly as visiting mankind; and now Barnabas, as the elder perhaps and more majestic figure of the two, must be Jupiter, and Paul, as the more eloquent speaker, must be Mercury, the classical God of eloquence. The priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. It was a grievous circumstance; but one knows not how to regret it. For one of the finest opportunities was given to the Apostles to demonstrate the spirit of real godliness. However pleasing it might be to corrupt nature to receive the idolatrous worship of a deluded people, nothing could be more abhorrent from the nature of the Gospel itself, and from the humble character of its teachers. They could not bear the sight; they rent their clothes, ran in among the people, and expostulated with them on the absurdity of their conduct. They assured them that they were no more than frail men like themselves, and that their intention in preaching to them was to turn them from these vanities to the living God, who formerly indeed had left all nations to follow their own way, but had now revealed a way of salvation from these idolatries; which, however, were by no means excusable, since the constant benefits of divine Providence called for thankfulness, and exhibited the supreme Creator to the consciences of men. Thus faithfully did the

Apostles preach conviction of sin to the Lycaonians, and with difficulty prevented the actual performance of the sacrifice, which would have given them more pain than the persecution which followed.

The fickle multitude were soon persuaded by some Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium, to harbour the worst opinion of Paul and Barnabas; and the dislike of secular glory which the Apostles manifested, contributed, no doubt, to alienate from them those who of late were so idolatrously attached to them. In a tumult that ensued, St. Paul was stoned and dragged out of the city as a corpse; but, while the disciples stood around him, he rose up and came into the city. The next day he and Barnabas departed to Derbe. There, many were converted; and the persecuting spirit intermitting, they visited again in circuit the regions of Pisidia and Lycaonia, encouraging the disciples to persevere in the faith of Jesus, in confidence of the divine support, and in full expectation of the heavenly kingdom, into which real Christians must not expect to enter without encountering much tribulation.

They now ordained some of the brethren to minister in every church, and earnestly recommended both pastors and flocks to the care of that gracious Lord on whom they believed, with solemn fasting and prayer. Returning through Pamphylia, they preached again at Perga; and from Attalia sailed to the great Antioch, from whence they had been recommended by the prayers of the church to the grace of God for the work which they had now fulfilled.

Here they remained a considerable time previous to their attendance at the council of Jeru-

salem; after which they returned to the same church in company with Judas and Silas, who, with authority from the mother-church, confirmed them in the liberty of the Gospel, in conjunction with many other teachers. The Christians of Antioch walked now in genuine consolation; and, while they dared to rest on Christ alone, they practised good works in a filial spirit. Thankful for the assistance of Judas and Silas, they dismissed them to the Apostles who had sent them. Silas, however, chose to remain in the service of the Gentiles.

Some days afterwards, Paul proposed to Barnabas a second circuitous visitation of the Asiatic churches. Barnabas, fond of Mark his nephew, proposed to take him with them. Paul, remembering his former desertion, thought him unfit for the work. On which side there was more blame in this contest it may be hard to determine. Probably both were too positive; but to us, at this distance of time, St. Paul's view of the question seems to be more just. The consequence was a separation between these two Christian leaders; and it does not appear that they ever saw one another afterwards, though we may be assured that their esteem and regard for each other continued. The best men are but men. Barnabas sailed with Mark to Cyprus, where he is dismissed from the sacred memoirs*.

We cannot depend on any thing concerning St. Barnabas besides what has been mentioned from the Acts of the Apostles. It is supposed that he spent his last days in his native island, and that he was stoned to death at Salamis by the Jews. The Epistle which bears his name,

* Milner's History of the Church of Christ.

though certainly very ancient, is generally thought to be a forgery.

That St. Barnabas was endued by God "with "singular gifts of the Holy Ghost," as is asserted in the introductory part of our collect, has been proved by the memoirs of his life which have been recited. The Scripture declares him to have been "a good man, full of the Holy Ghost "and of faith." His warm charity to the souls and bodies of men, his fervid zeal and persevering diligence in the work of the ministry, are prominent features of the preceding narrative. By a long series of affectionate labours he "hazarded his life for the name of the Lord "Jesus," as the college of Apostles testified concerning him.

On this memorial of St. Barnabas we found a prayer for the communication of the same gifts to ourselves in such measure as may be necessary to our personal profit and extrinsical usefulness. We implore not a renewal of miraculous powers, but to be furnished with those talents which may qualify us for the station which we hold in the church, whether as ministers or people. We acknowledge that all ability to do good, whether mental or corporeal, proceeds from God, "without whom nothing is strong, "nothing is holy." It is deeply to be lamented that few professing Christians consider the source of those abilities which they possess, or feel any desire to employ them for their proper end, the "honour and glory of God, through Jesus Christ "our Lord."

We moreover implore "grace" that we may always use the gifts which God bestows on us to his honour and glory. O what a humiliating view of the human heart doth this petition of

our collect present, since it supposes that we are liable to employ God's own gifts to his dishonour! That it is not a libel, awful matter of fact demonstrates. For, oh! how many have no concern for the promotion of the divine glory, though they must know that all they have proceeds from God. "They seek their "own, and not the things which are Jesus "Christ's." They forget that they are placed in the church for the fulfilment of duties which they owe to it and its Lord; and the language of their daily conduct is, "We are our own."

But among those persons who know that they are entrusted with talents for the purpose of promoting the divine glory, how needful is an importunate use of the prayer before us! For how faint and interrupted is our pursuit of that object which we have in view! How defective in humility, charity, and zeal, do we prove ourselves to be! And how often do secular interests bias our minds, diverting our aim from the interests of God and his church! Surely every pious minister must feel the necessity of praying for a large measure of God's "manifold "gifts," when he considers the work in which he is embarked; and for grace to use what he possesses, or may yet be conferred on him, to the divine honour, when he contemplates the selfishness and worldliness of his own heart. And surely every pious layman also, considering that while he is a recipient of blessing he is also to be a channel of conveying it to others in his sphere of action, in his family and in the church, must perceive the necessity of concurring heartily with his minister in this important prayer. The present state of religion among us affords a comment on its propriety which cannot be misunderstood.

ST. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.

Almighty God, by whose providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son our Saviour by preaching of repentance; make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and, after his example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It is observable, that the Baptist's nativity is the only one (that of Christ excepted) which the church has thought proper to celebrate. The days appointed for the commemoration of other saints, are generally those on which they respectively ceased from their labours, and entered into their everlasting rest; the day of a good man's death being, indeed, the day of his birth, and this world no more than the womb in which he is formed and matured for his admission into a better where there is neither crying nor pain. But the nativity of St. John being designed, by the remarkable incidents that accompanied it, to turn the eyes of men towards one who was far greater—one, the latchet of whose shoes he confessed himself not worthy to unloose—the church keeps a day sacred to it, and directs us to begin our meditations by considering, as all Judea did when it happened, "what manner of

"child" that should be, which was so wonderfully born. (Luke i. 66.)

The Scripture account of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of the Baptist, is concise but comprehensive. He was "a priest of the course "of Abia; she was of the daughters of Aaron;" and "they were both righteous before God, "walking in all the commandments and ordi- "nances of the Lord, blameless." Luke i. 5, 6. Zacharias adorned the holy office of the priesthood in most degenerate times by a corresponding holiness of life. From such a father, and a mother worthy of him, who graced the line of Aaron by a like sanctity of manners, the Baptist descended; that the Jews might have no possible objection against him, and that he might be a forerunner of one who was to exhibit the beauty of holiness to all the world.

The evangelical history having stated the character of Zacharias and Elizabeth, proceeds in the very next words to inform us that "they "had no child, because that Elizabeth was "barren, and they were both well stricken in "years." John was to be born of parents, from whom, according to the usual course of nature, no issue was to be expected; that the miraculous manner of his birth might excite the attention of mankind, and dispose them to listen to his voice when it should be heard in the wilderness; and also that it might prepare them for that great event which was taking place, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold,—"A virgin shall conceive "and bear a son." In circumstances parallel with those of St. John were born of old Isaac and Joseph, Sampson and Samuel, all of them illustrious forerunners of the Messiah, in one or

other of his three characters, prophetical, sacerdotal, or regal. And, no doubt, God intended, by so often causing the barren "woman to keep "house and to be a joyful mother of children," to make that power known, by which the incarnation of the Redeemer and the fruitfulness of the church were to be effected in the latter days; when, according to St. Paul, the prophetical injunction of Isaiah was obeyed, "Sing, O barren, "thou that didst not bear; break forth into "singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not "travail with child." Isa. liv. 1; Gal. iv. 27.

A son was promised to Zacharias "while he "executed the priest's office before God," as the ritual of the church enjoined, "in the order of "his course, and according to the custom." Luke i. 8, 9. The annunciation of the Baptist's conception happened at the time of incense, when his father, having put on the robe of honour, and being clothed like the great Mediator whom he personated with the garments of glory and beauty, entered into the temple; while the whole congregation of the people, assembled without, sent up their united prayers to be accepted at the throne of grace, through the intercession which was then making for them by the levitical priest, acting in the name of him who was to arise "after the order of Melchizedec, and not "to be called after the order of Aaron." Heb. vii. 11. While the joint prayers of priest and people were thus offered up with the blood of sprinkling and the sweet-smelling savour of the holy incense, an angel suddenly appeared to Zacharias as he was executing his office in the temple; that being the place to which those blessed spirits, when they visit these lower

regions, ever delight to resort, as being the nearest resemblance to the happy mansions from which they descend.

But whether it be that the glory of celestial spirits overpowers the faculties of human nature, or that man, conscious of having sinned against heaven, naturally trembles at the sight of a messenger from thence; we find that the appearance of an angel had the same effect on Zacharias, the blessed virgin, and the shepherds: they were all "sore afraid." The angel therefore addressed him, saying, "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer "is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee "a son." Zacharias had prayed for the redemption of Israel by the Messiah; and therefore was honoured by being made, in a wonderful manner, the father of his illustrious forerunner. The priest was anxious for the welfare of the church, and the man was blessed in his own private concerns. He sought "first the kingdom of God "and his righteousness," and the blessing of a son was "added unto him." Thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name JOHN, that is, being interpreted, the *grace* or *gift;* "and many shall rejoice at his birth:" not only thou shalt rejoice, and Elizabeth with thee, at the birth of a son so long despaired of, and such a son too; but it shall be matter of joy, at the time, to all who look for redemption; and afterwards, thousands and millions shall rejoice at the remembrance of it; the day shall be kept as a festival throughout all generations; with joy and gladness shall it be kept, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Encouraged by the example of Zacharias, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, be never weary of waiting for his loving-kindness in the midst of his temple.

Let it be the delight of their lives to execute their office, every one in that order and station in which he is placed. So will God make them to hear of joy and gladness, and grant them to behold the success of their labours for the conversion of sinners and the edification of his people. The church, like Elizabeth, shall bring forth fruit in her old age; and her friends shall rejoice greatly, when they hear that the Lord hath shewed mercy on her. (Luke i. 58.)

Distrust of Providence and the accomplishment of its designs, when appearances are on the other side, will sometimes invade the hearts of the best of men; and Zacharias himself so far partook of the incredulous spirit which at that period had possessed the synagogue, that he "sought after a sign." "Whereby shall I "know this? For I am an old man, and my "wife well stricken in years." How different, in a parallel case, was the behaviour of Abraham, which St. Paul has described. (Rom. iv. 18–21.) The demand of Zacharias, however, was complied with, and a sign was granted him in the punishment of his unbelief. The use of that tongue, which, instead of giving glory to God, had been employed in raising objections, was taken from him, and a silence of some months was imposed as a penance for the abuse of speech.

But when the wonderful child was born, who, even before his birth, entered on his prophetical office, and gave testimony to his Saviour in the womb, there declaring by his exultation, what he afterwards did by words, "Behold the Lamb "of God;" and Zacharias had acknowledged the GIFT of God, by directing that his name should be JOHN: then the mouth of the father

was opened; and to shew us the proper employment of the tongue, when heaven grants the use of it, he "praised God." Faith restored what incredulity had taken away; "he believed and "therefore he spake." And his heart having been prepared by silence and retirement for the reception of celestial influences, he was now "filled with the Holy Ghost;" and brake forth into that divine hymn, which is still used in the church* as a proper expression of her praises for redeeming love.

All the information we have concerning St. John from the time of his birth to that of his public appearance is contained in the few following words:—"And the child grew, and waxed "strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the "day of his shewing unto Israel." Luke i. 80. There, apart from the world, and under the tuition of heaven, he was catechised in the principles of divine wisdom, initiated into the mystery of a holy life, and perfected in the discipline of self-denial;

> The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell,
> His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well:
> Remote from man, with God he pass'd his days,
> Pray'r all his business, all his pleasure praise.
>
> PARNELL.

From the circumstance of St. John's education in the deserts, we may venture to draw a conclusion which will be of general use, with regard to all ministers of the Gospel, *viz.* that the soli-

* In the Morning Service after the Second Lesson. The reader will find a beautiful comment on this hymn in Dr. Horne's Considerations on the Life and Death of John the Baptist, from whence the narrative of this Essay is extracted.

tary way of life is necessary to qualify them for the offices of the social, or, that he who would serve God acceptably in public, must first prepare himself for that purpose in private. The reason is, because no man is properly qualified to teach wisdom and holiness, who doth not himself possess them. And a little reflection will convince us, how needful retirement is for the acquisition of both.

When the days of St. John's preparatory retirement were expired, at the age of thirty years, "the word of God came to him in the wilder-"ness," (Luke iii. 2,) and commissioned him to enter on his ministry. Neither the exigencies of mankind, nor a consciousness of abilities for the work, can be pleaded as a sufficient warrant for a man to run before he is sent, and take the sacred office on himself without a regular and lawful call. The place to which the Baptist repaired, is styled "the wilderness of Judea;" a country not like the vast and uninhabited deserts in which he was educated, but one thinly peopled, a comparative wilderness, chosen by him on account of its bordering on the river Jordan. Hither the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities and villages presently flocked in great numbers, attracted by the uncommon sanctity of the new preacher, who thus came forth on a sudden from the deserts, like one from another world without any connexion in this, that no attachment might take him off from the duties of his high calling, or any way impede him in the exercise of it.

The austerities of the Baptist's life, with respect both to his diet and clothing, corresponded with his peculiar office and the doctrine which he was sent to preach. Like his predecessor Elijah, he was coarsely attired, "his rai-

"ment being of camel's hair, with a leathern "girdle about his loins." He was content with the plainest food which nature could provide for him, "his meat being locusts and wild honey." His whole person, habit, and manner of life were themselves a sermon, and the best illustration of the doctrine he was about to teach: he was a proper person to prepare the way for Christ, and introduce the law to the Gospel; to shew men what effect the one ought to have upon them, in order to dispose them for the blessings of the other; that mercy might save from the wrath which justice had denounced, and Jesus comfort those whom Moses had caused to mourn.

Strange as St. John's appearance and manner of life might at first seem, they were presently explained, when he began to preach a doctrine harsh and distasteful to flesh and blood, like the garment he wore, and the food on which he subsisted. "Repent ye;" that is, Be converted, or changed, in heart and mind, in principle and practice, from error to truth, from sin to righteousness, from the flesh to the Spirit, from the world to God; "for the kingdom of "heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2); a new and heavenly kingdom is about to be set up among you, with new and heavenly laws, under a new and heavenly king, the promised Messiah; and none, but men of new and heavenly tempers and dispositions, can possibly become the subjects of it. I am the person commissioned to prepare you for your happy change, by calling you to repentance, and to my baptism which is "the "baptism of repentance for the remission of "sins," (Luke iii. 3,) through faith in him "who "cometh after me" to confer pardon and forgiveness. I am the messenger foretold by Malachi

and Isaiah, sent in this manner to prepare the way of him who is your king, your Lord, and your God, now ready to be revealed as the Saviour of men:—"Repent ye, for the kingdom of "heaven is at hand." Thus did St. John lay the foundation of the evangelical edifice in mortification and self-denial, nor did his blessed Master afterward propose the glories of a crown to any but those, who should be ready to take up their cross in the way to them.

To detail the particulars of St. John's ministry, his appropriate addresses to the Pharisees, the publicans, and the soldiers who applied to him for instruction, would exceed our limits. We must therefore pass over these, as well as the baptism of our Lord in Jordan by his ministry, and his answer to the deputation sent to him from the Sanhedrim for the purpose of inquiring who he was, what character he sustained, and what were his pretensions.

As our collect leads us to consider the doctrine of St. John, we shall observe, before we quit the prefatory part of it, that his doctrine was not confined to "repentance towards God," but included also "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." For he took the first opportunity that offered itself of pointing out the person of Jesus to the people: "John seeth Jesus coming unto him," probably to acknowledge him as his friend, relation, and precursor; and saith, "Behold the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the "world:" Behold that blessed person prefigured in the law, and foretold by the prophets; one that is all meekness and innocence, patience and resignation, without offence in his mouth, without guile or malice in his heart, without spot or blemish in soul or body: the Lamb which Abra-

ham told his son Isaac that God would in time provide; the Lamb, by the sprinkling of whose blood true Israelites are preserved from the destroyer; the sacrifice, on which are laid the iniquities of us all; the Saviour, who, by expiating taketh away the sin of the world, and conferreth righteousness on them that will believe on him, and accept it from him, being conformed to his example of meekness and lowliness. Happy the Christian minister, who, like St. John, lives only to point out the Saviour to his people! And happy the people, who, like John's disciples, thereupon follow Jesus, inquire where he dwelleth, enter in, and abide with him!

Thus we have shewn that, by a divine providence, "John Baptist was wonderfully born, and "sent to prepare the way of our Saviour by "preaching of repentance." We proceed to consider the prayer which follows, which will lead us to notice some further particulars in the life and death of the Baptist. We pray that God would "make us so to follow his doctrine and "holy life, that we may truly repent according "to his preaching; and, after his example, con-"stantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and "patiently suffer for the truth's sake, through "Jesus Christ our Lord."

What the doctrine of the Baptist was, we have already seen. He exhorted men to "repent" of their sins, and to "behold the Lamb of God" for their remission; duties, the incumbency of which was not confined to the cotemporaries of St. John, but which are required of all as essentials to salvation, because "all have sinned, and "come short of the glory of God." As we have before enlarged on the nature of repentance and

faith*, we need not here to dwell thereon; but shall only observe that a "holy life" is the constant effect of receiving duly the doctrine of repentance. Fruits worthy of it are its constant attendants. The example of St. John affords us a bright pattern of humility, faith, self-mortification, deadness to the world, and devotedness to God, which claims our close attention and imitation. But in order that we may resemble him, we must implore the same grace which was poured on him: we must also be influenced by the Holy Ghost, by whose influence he was "filled even from his mother's womb."

The subsequent passage of our collect alludes to the closing scene of the Baptist's ministry and life. A person unacquainted with the world, and the temper of its children, might, perhaps, be surprised on hearing that a prophet like St. John, who spent his time in calling his fellow-creatures to happiness and salvation, and who coveted no man's gold, or silver, or apparel, was cast into prison. But as Ahab, at the instigation of Jezebel, thirsted after the blood of Elijah; the blood of the second Elijah was actually shed by a second Ahab, instigated by a second Jezebel.

Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, had put away his own wife, the daughter of Aretas, and had married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip; whom, contrary to the laws of hospitality as well as religion, he had seduced while he was a guest in her husband's house. The sanctity and integrity of the Baptist had begotten, even in Herod, a great veneration and reverence for his cha-

* See the Essays on the Collects for Ash-Wednesday, Sexagesima Sunday, and the Second Sunday after Easter.

racter. "Herod feared John, knowing that he "was a just man, and an holy, and observed "him; and when he heard him, he did many "things, and heard him gladly." But the matter of Herodias was a tender point, on which the Tetrarch was not disposed to hear the law, because he was not disposed to do it. He was determined to persevere in what was wrong, and his monitor to persist in telling him of it, without reserve:—"John said unto him, It is not "lawful for thee to have her." John, who had overcome the world, could not, either by promises or threatenings, be induced to recede from his duty, through hope of temporal good, or fear of temporal evil. He was therefore soon convinced, by being carried to prison, that Herod had no further occasion for his service. And who doth not rather wish to have been imprisoned with the Baptist, than to have glittered in all the glories of the throne of Herod? Happy John, sequestered once more from a troublesome world, to converse with God, and to meditate on that blessed company to which he was now hastening.

Herod had thrown John into prison, but this would not satisfy Herodias. Even there she seemed to hear him still preaching upon the old text, and reproaching her with her crimes. (Mark vi. 19, &c.) For a time the fear of the Jews, who respected John, preserved his life by deterring Herod from destroying him. An opportunity, however, at length occurred, by which Herodias was enabled to gratify her revenge, and to remove the disturber of her guilty peace. The day arrived on which Herod's nativity was celebrated, when "he made a great supper to "his lords, high captains, and chief estates of

"Galilee." On this occasion, Salome, the daughter of Herodias by her lawful husband, graced the festivity by dancing before the company, in a manner which "pleased Herod, and them that "sat with him." Charmed with her performance the Tetrarch made her a rash promise which he confirmed by an oath;—"Whatsoever thou shalt "ask of me, I will give it thee, to the half of "my kingdom." But half his kingdom would not do, something was required more valuable than the whole of it, had it extended from Judea quite round the globe. Nothing would satisfy but his honour, his conscience, his soul; the price, which sin never fails to ask! The glorious golden opportunity of revenge was not to be lost. Herodias is consulted by her daughter, and lo, the soft, tender, delicate Salome re-enters all athirst for blood,—"Give me in a charger the "head of John the Baptist,"—of a prophet—of a person whom thou knowest to be innocent, holy, upright. Make me this sacrifice, and I am content.

Herod, though at first shocked at the request, yielded to the dictates of his pride; and though "sorry," yet "for his oath's sake, and those "who sat at meat with him, he would not "reject her." The Baptist's fate being thus determined, "immediately the king sent an "executioner, and commanded his head to be "brought; and he went and beheaded John in "the prison." St. John was probably awakened to receive his sentence out of that balmy sleep which truth and innocence can secure to their possessor in any situation. The generality of mankind have reason enough to deprecate a sudden death, lest it should surprise them in a state unprepared for an exchange of worlds.

But St. John had finished the work which God had given him to do. He had kept the faith, and preserved a conscience void of offence. He had seen the salvation of God, and waited daily and hourly for his departure. He was now, therefore, called off from his station with honour, to quit the well-fought field for the palace of the great King; to refresh himself after the dust, and toil, and heat of the day, by bathing in the fountain of life and immortality; to exchange his blood-stained armour for a robe of glory, and to have his temporary labours rewarded with eternal rest; to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God; and, as the friend of the Bridegroom, to enter into the joy of his Lord. From the darkness and confinement of a prison he passed to the liberty and light of heaven; and while malice was gratified with a sight of his head, and his body was carried by a few friends in silence to the grave, his immortal spirit repaired to a court, where no Herod desires to have his brother's wife, where no Herodias thirsts after the blood of a prophet; where he, who hath laboured with sincerity and diligence in the work of reformation, is sure to be well received; where men of holiness, zeal, and constancy, "are "crowned, and receive palms from the Son of "God whom they confessed in the world." 2 Esdras ii. 45–47.

O how bright the example of "constantly "speaking truth, boldly rebuking vice, and "patiently suffering for the truth's sake," is that which the history of the Baptist exhibits! May the reader's heart be fired with a desire of imitating the pattern proposed to his ambition; and conscious of inability to copy it in the

least degree by his own unassisted powers, may he earnestly solicit a portion of that divine grace by which the Baptist was what he was. The fountain of grace is open to all believers; and though neither the writer nor reader of this Essay may ever be called, as St. John was, to testify the truth at the risk of life; yet both are placed in situations, where they are called to appear on the Lord's side in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; both, if faithful to God, will be exposed to persecution for the truth's sake, which they can neither boldly face nor patiently suffer without divine help.

The duty of constantly speaking truth, and of boldly reproving vice, is undoubted, and of universal obligation. "Thou shalt not hate "thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any "wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin "upon him:" or (marg. reading) "that thou "bear not sin for him." Lev. xix. 17. If we prove the means of provoking or soliciting others to sin, if we comply with the sins of others, or even if we suffer others to sin unreproved, or without imposing those restraints which it may be in our power to impose,—verily we discover a want of concern both for the glory of God and for the souls of our fellow-creatures, we incur a share of the guilt which is contracted, we make ourselves "partakers of other men's "sins." 1 Tim. v. 22. It is admitted that great wisdom, as well as great courage, is often required to a due discharge of this duty. But he who gives the latter, can also confer the former. And, while the treasury of grace is open to us, a want of qualification will be no excuse for a neglect of our bounden duty. To disguise, conceal, or deny the truth, either by

silence, word, or action, when the glory of God and the salvation of a fellow sinner is at stake,—this is to manifest a spirit directly opposite to that of our holy religion, in which the fear of God, and charity to human souls, are paramount considerations.

In the congregations of professing Christians, how few imitators of the noble Baptist are to be found! Where is the constant speaker of truth, the bold rebuker of vice, the patient sufferer for the truth's sake? Let us not form an excuse for our pusillanimity by saying that this duty was peculiar to the Baptist, or confined to authorised messengers from heaven. Every man is the authorised messenger of God to "speak "the truth, and rebuke vice;" or our church has furnished us with a prayer which it is absurd to use. Would it be any apology for a man who had been guilty of misprision of treason, to allege that he had no commission from the king? No, the law of England justly condemns every man, who, "knowing of any trea-"son, though no party or consenter to it, yet "conceals it and doth not reveal it in proper "time." It condemns him to "imprisonment "during life, to a forfeiture of all his goods for "ever, and the profits of his lands during life*." And is not every overt act of sin treason against God?

If the obligation of the duty stated in our collect were more closely and generally considered, and were its petition for grace more fervently adopted, Christians would, it is admitted, incur more persecution for righteousness sake, but they would also give more glory to God, be the

* Burns' Justice, art. Treason.

means of plucking many brands from the fire, and obtain more decisive evidence than they now possess, of their relation to the holy army of martyrs and confessors. Let us, then, set the example of the Baptist before our eyes for our imitation; and let us earnestly implore grace that we may be conformed to it, "through Jesus "Christ our Lord*."

* The limits of this Essay are unusually extended. The author, having taken into his hand Dr. Horne's "Consi- "derations on the Life and Death of John the Baptist," from which he has extracted the historical part of this section of his work, found himself on enchanted ground. He is not aware, however, that its length needs any apology, believing that his reader will concur with him in opinion respecting the admirable source from which has been principally drawn what is here presented to view.

ST. PETER'S DAY.

O Almighty God, who, by thy Son Jesus Christ, didst give to thine Apostle St. Peter many excellent gifts, and commandedst him earnestly to feed thy flock; Make, we beseech thee, all bishops and pastors diligently to preach thy holy word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ST. PETER was born in the Upper Galilee, called Galilee of the Gentiles. The name which was given to him at his circumcision, was Simon or Simeon, a name common among the Jews. To this our Lord added the title of Cephas; which, in Syriac, the vulgar language of the Jews at that time, signifies a stone or rock, which is interpreted, in Greek, or is equivalent to Πετρος, Peter. By the imposition of this new name our Lord seems to refer to that constancy in the faith, and that vigorous activity, for which he foresaw that this Apostle would be eminent, in building up the church as a spiritual house on the true rock—"the living and corner stone, "chosen of God and precious," as St. Peter himself expresses it. The father of our Apostle was Jonah or Jonas, a fisherman of Bethsaida; and St. Andrew, as we have already observed in his life, was St. Peter's brother. They were both brought up to their father's busi-

ness, and continued in it till they were called to become the fishers of men. The divinity of the Gospel is strongly deducible from the meanness of its propagators: for what but a divine power could have rendered doctrines so hostile to every darling principle of the carnal heart as those of the Gospel are, victorious over the long-established and firmly-rooted systems of Judaism and Heathenism, which had in the train of their defenders and supporters all the learning and the wisdom of the world, while the Gospel was published by the untutored lips of fishermen and publicans? Let the infidel account for this phenomenon if he can. "God chose the foolish "things of the world to confound the wise; the "weak to confound those that are mighty; the "base things of the world," things most vilified and despised, "yea, and things which are not, "to bring to nought things that are." 1 Cor. i. 17, 18. These were the things which God appointed, these were the persons whom God sent on this errand, to silence "the wise, the scribe, "the disputer of this world." For though "the "Jews required a sign, and the Greeks sought "after wisdom;" though the preaching of a crucified Saviour was a scandal to the self-righteous Jews, and foolishness to the learned Grecians; yet "by this foolishness of preaching God was "pleased to save them that believed;" and in the event made it to appear, that "the foolish-"ness of God is wiser than men, and the weak-"ness of God stronger than men." Hereby all the glory is secured for God, and "no flesh" suffered to glory in his presence; but "he that "glorieth," is constrained to "glory in the "Lord" alone.

It is probable that St. Peter, before his intro-

duction to Christ, was a disciple of the Baptist, as it is certain that his brother St. Andrew was. No sooner was the latter made acquainted with the Messiah, pointed out to him by his master, the Baptist, than he hastened to inform his brother thereof. Religion is a communicative principle, which, like a circle formed in the water, delights to multiply itself, to diffuse its influence as far as possible, and especially on those whom nature has placed nearest to us. Simon, being one of those who waited for redemption in Israel, was ravished with the joyful news which his brother imparted, and, impatient of delay, directly followed him to the place of our Lord's abode. Our Lord no sooner saw him than, with a view to afford him evidence of his own divinity, he saluted him by name, told him who and what he was, with respect both to his name and kindred, and what title he should afterwards bear. After receiving, as we may suppose, some further instruction, the two brothers returned for a while to their secular occupation.

About a year afterwards our Lord retired out of the city of Capernaum, where he usually resided, for the purpose of enjoying the privacy of contemplation upon the banks of the sea of Galilee. But he was discovered and followed by a multitude, who thirsted for the dew of his doctrine, as the parched and barren earth for the showers of heaven. To avoid the pressure of the throng, our Lord stepped into a fishing-boat, which lay by the shore and belonged to Peter, whom he requested to push off to a little distance. Here he sat and taught the people, and then confirmed the truth of his sermon by a stupendous miracle. Peter and his companions had toiled all

night at their business of fishing without success. Our Lord now commanded him to launch out further, and to cast down his net. Simon remonstrated on the improbability of any compensation for their trouble, judging from the experience of the preceding night. He, however, immediately complied with the order which he had received, and an immense number of fishes was enclosed by his net. Amazed at the miracle, Simon, with mixed emotions of fear and humility, threw himself at the feet of Christ, and besought him to depart from him as a vile and sinful person. Dazzled by the lustre of our Lord's divinity, he thought himself unworthy to be in the presence of so great a personage; and, conscious of guilt, seems to have been afraid lest vengeance should pursue and overtake him. But our Lord, for the purpose of removing his apprehensions, assured him that the miracle was not intended to terrify him, but to confirm his faith, and that he had now other employment for him than that to which he was accustomed, for that he was henceforth to catch the precious souls of men in the net of the Gospel. He accordingly ordered both Simon and his brother Andrew to follow him, and to become his stated attendants—an order with which they immediately complied.

When our blessed Lord chose from among his disciples twelve persons to be his more intimate friends and followers, to be the eye-witnesses of his miracles, and to hear his more secret instructions, St. Peter was placed first on the list, his age and the gravity of his person probably qualifying him for a primacy of order amongst the Apostles. He was also one of the favoured triumvirate whom our Lord admitted to the more secret transactions of his life.

Our limits will not permit us to detail at length the memoirs of St. Peter which the Scripture furnishes, and which are more copious than those of the other Apostles, except St. Paul; St. Peter's natural warmth of temper having made him a prominent figure on the stage of observation. Referring the reader, therefore, to those writers who have collected and enlarged on the several particulars of the sacred story relative to our Apostle*, or to the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles in which they are dispersed, we shall only relate what information is to be derived from uninspired ecclesiastical history. "Where "St. Peter continued to exercise his ministry, "we cannot pretend to determine. The pre- "tensions of the church of Rome to the long- "continued services of this Apostle are generally "discredited by Protestant writers. Nor is much "more credit due to Eusebius, when, on the "authority of Metaphrastus, he affirmed that St. "Peter preached in Britain. From the cir- "cumstance of his being distinguished as the "Apostle of the circumcision, it is probable that "Judea, Samaria, Syria, together with Pontus, "Galacia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia, (to "the Jewish strangers of which countries his "epistles are addressed,) were the principal scenes "of his ministry. In the latter part of his life "he appears to have spent some time at Rome, "and there he received the honour of martyr- "dom.

"A champion like Peter, who fought in the "hottest front of the battle, could not but draw

* Scil. Dr. Cave's Origines Apostolicæ; Nelson's Feasts and Fasts; and an excellent Narrative in the first volume of the Christian Observer.

" upon himself the fury of his enemies. Orders " were issued to apprehend the Apostles; and " St. Ambrose tells us, that, by the pressing soli- " citations of the church, Peter was persuaded to " look for some secure retreat, and was passing " through the gates of Rome, when he met the " venerable form of his divine Master, who told " him that he was going to Rome ' to be cruci- " ' fied a second time.' This vision St. Peter is " said to have considered as a reproof of his " cowardice, and returning again into the city, " was apprehended, and thrown with St. Paul " into the Mamertine prison. Here he con- " tinued eight or nine months, preaching to the " prisoners and such as resorted to him; and " during his imprisonment he is supposed to " have written his Second Epistle, in which he " speaks of his martyrdom as nigh at hand. " On the return of Nero from Achaia, he was " ordered for execution, and expired on the cross " on the top of the Vatican mount.

" Such was the glorious death by which St. " Peter finished the career of his illustrious " labours. From the beginning to the end of it " he was distinguished by his Master's confidence, " and the marked deference of his brother Apos- " tles. Both these circumstances indicate some " personal superiority in St. Peter; which chiefly " consisted, however, in the boldness and simpli- " city of his character, the strength of his faith, " and the ardour of his love and zeal. His faults " were the result of the same natural constitution " of mind to which we ascribe his peculiar ex- " cellencies. The first were corrected and the " last improved, as he grew in knowledge and in " grace. His epistles have all the features of a " bold and vigorous mind. The fire of his imagi-

"nation is mellowed by time, and with all the "richness of mature wisdom and piety, he lays "open a heart full of affection and solicitude for "the welfare of the flock*."

Thus it appears that Almighty God "by his "Son Jesus Christ gave to his Apostle St. "Peter many excellent gifts." His endowments, whether natural or acquired, were the gifts of God. And the consecration of his native qualities to their only proper use, the promotion of the divine glory, was entirely the result of sanctifying grace, conferred on him by the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Had he been questioned on the subject, he would cheerfully have adopted the confession of his brother St. Paul, and have said, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

The latter clause of the introductory part of our collect, relates to an incident in St. Peter's life which must be recited, because thereon is founded the important prayer which follows. God, it is asserted, earnestly commanded Peter to feed his flock. The command referred to proceeded from the lips of the risen Jesus on the occasion which we are about to mention; and as Christ and his Father are one, the acts of Christ were the acts of the Father also. On this ground only can the grammatical construction of our collect be accommodated to the historic fact.

At the conclusion of a dinner, in which our Lord condescended to partake with his disciples after his resurrection, for the further confirmation of the faith, he particularly addressed himself to Peter, urging him to the utmost diligence

* "Life of Simon Peter the Apostle" in the Christian Observer, vol. i. p. 286.

in the care of souls. And because he knew that an ardent love to himself was necessary to carry his Apostles through all the troubles, difficulties and hazards of the dangerous and difficult work in which they were to engage, (a work attended with every impediment which either the perverseness of men, or the malice and subtilty of the devil, could suggest and throw in its way,) therefore he first inquired of Peter whether he loved him more than the rest of the Apostles*,—herein mildly reproving his former too-confident resolution, that, though all the rest should deny their Master, yet would he never deny him. Peter modestly replied, without censuring others, or much less preferring himself before them, that our Lord knew the integrity of his affection towards him. This question Christ solemnly addressed to Peter three several times, and Peter returned the same answer to each question. It was but just and reasonable that he, who, by a three-fold denial of his divine Master, had given so much cause for questioning his love, should now, by a three-fold confession, give a strong assurance of his sincere affection to him. Peter, however, was a little grieved at this thrice repeated dubitation of his love; and therefore in his third reply he appeals to our Lord's omniscience as a criterion of it. On each of these confessions his divine Master proposed this trial of his affection, "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs:" that is, faithfully instruct them, carefully watch over, guide and govern them. As thou wilt be

* The original words πλειον τουτων are ambiguous; and Dr. Whitby explains them as if Christ had asked, Lovest thou me more than these nets and other implements of thy trade, so as to prefer my service to any temporal advantages?

entrusted, in common with the rest of my Apostles, with the care of my church, remember that the most acceptable way of expressing thy regard for me, and the most decisive token of sincere attachment, will be a tender and anxious concern for my flock, and even for the weakest and feeblest among them.

On this injunction the petition of our collect is founded. Therein we beseech "Almighty "God," that he would make "all bishops and "pastors diligently to preach his holy word, and "the people obediently to follow the same, that "they may receive the crown of everlasting glory, "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

That every qualification for the ministerial office is derived from God, either mediately or immediately, is too plain to need a laboured demonstration. Our natural endowments are his gifts, as he is our Creator; and the appropriation of these gifts to his glory is the effect of his grace, as he is our Sanctifier. And therefore every candidate for holy orders is required solemnly to declare his trust that he is "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take "upon him this office and ministration, to serve "God for the promoting of his glory and the "edifying of his people." For it is supposed that every candidate is influenced by pure and upright motives, love to God, zeal for his honour, and pity for the souls of men, — principles, which can only spring up in the fallen heart of man through the illuminating and sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. The will to devote ourselves to the service of God, and the power to carry this holy resolution into act, are justly ascribed to him. If this be true in the several occupations of a common life, its truth is still

more apparent in the work of the ministry,—a work, which is in itself so arduous that every conscious mind engaged in it must cry out with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "Who is suf-"ficient for these things?"

To preach the word of God with diligence and fidelity requires a continual communication from God of light to the mind and of energy to the heart. Without the former, we cannot "rightly divide the word of truth," but shall misrepresent those doctrines on a right apprehension of which the eternal salvation of our hearers depends. Without the latter, we shall be in danger of "handling the word of God "deceitfully,"—of failing to "declare the whole "counsel of God,"—of abridging or perverting those obnoxious truths, the declaration of which will expose us either to the contempt or hatred of the carnal mind. Without a constant derivation of spiritual vigour from above, we should "grow weary in well doing," cease to be "instant in season and out of season," and find some excuse or other for intermitting the delightful work of "teaching and preaching "Jesus Christ."

It appears not improbable, that this petition of our collect was drawn up with a reference to the corruptions of the Romish church, in which the office of preaching was little esteemed and greatly neglected. In the primitive church, the bishops deemed it as much a part of their duty as any other ministerial act. But there was a time when the bishops of Rome were not known to preach for five hundred years in succession*.

* See Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, book ii. chap. iii. sect. 4.

In opposition to this neglect of an employment which may be styled one of the most difficult and important in the list of pastoral duties, we find our honest bishop Latimer bearing a frequent and pointed testimony. The want of faithful preaching was a grand cause of that general ignorance, which, previous to the Reformation, had overspread the Christian world; and its revival was a main engine in the overthrow of Popery and the restoration of primitive Christianity. In proportion as this office is diligently performed or neglected, and as it is performed by persons duly qualified or unqualified, must religion itself flourish or decrease. The importance, therefore, of our present collect is very great.

With respect to the frequency with which this office ought to be fulfilled, the church could lay down no rule that should be applicable to all cases. By the petition of our collect she has indirectly informed us, that every opportunity of communicating instruction to the people, both in public and private, should be eagerly embraced by all bishops and pastors*. And surely the nature of the case requires their utmost diligence. For the objects of their care are continually assailed by the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh, to which all the pains that the most able and industrious pastor can possibly take, will never prove in the event to be a sufficient counterpoise. Death is

* Should the reader wish to see the distinction which our collect makes between bishops and other pastors, justified from Scripture and the practice of the primitive church, he will derive complete satisfaction from Bishop Hall's tract on Episcopacy, and from Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, book ii.

daily withdrawing our people from the scene of instruction into an eternal world. And therefore a faithful pastor will never "cease his la-"bour, his care and diligence, until he hath "done all that lieth in him, according to his "bounden duty, to bring all such as are com-"mitted to his charge, unto that agreement in "the faith and knowledge of God, and to that "ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that "there be no place left among them, either for "error in religion or for viciousness of life*."

What can be more solemn than the following apostolical injunction, addressed to Timothy and to all who are invested with the pastoral office in Christ's church?—"Preach the word; "be instant, in season, out of season." How strict the precept! How extensive the obligation! The high responsibility of their character of a truth surpasses all the power of language; and the unremitted assiduity, with which they are required to attend to the discharge of their appropriate duties, is sufficient to deter from undertaking so arduous an employment every conscientious man who does not actually experience in himself a confidence or trust, founded on solid reasons, that he is moved thereto by the Holy Ghost. And every clergyman of this description, when in the concluding moments of his life he shall take a serious review of his past conduct, both private and public, will be impelled by the feelings of his heart, instead of vindicating himself before God, to adopt the dying supplication for pardon uttered by Archbishop Usher, "But, Lord, in special forgive "my sins of omission!"—strange words, dropping

* Ordination service.

from the lips of a shepherd in Israel so eminently distinguished by Christian virtues, ministerial talents, indefatigable diligence, and abundant success in the work of the Lord!

We proceed to pray that God would "make "the people obediently to follow his holy word," as it is diligently preached by the bishops and pastors of his church. The propriety of this petition will be clear to every one who considers that though "Paul plant and Apollos water, it "is God who giveth the increase." With whatever zeal and perspicuity the holy word of God may be proclaimed by his ministers, it is his grace alone which can render it effectual to the salvation of the hearers. Conversion is the work of God; for it is a new creation. (2 Cor. v. 17; Eph. ii. 10.) And without his divine operation on the heart, no powers of moral suasion can produce either saving faith or a corresponding practice.

On the diligence which bishops and pastors manifest in preaching the word of God, not indeed as an insulated act of duty, but as an essential link in the chain of ministerial offices, and on the obedience which the people pay to the word of God thus preached to them, depends, respectively, their reception of "the crown of everlasting glory," which God has prepared for his devoted servants, whether clergy or laity. Not that either fidelity in the pastoral office, or obedience to the word of God, is meritorious of salvation. But God has graciously connected the reward which he has prepared with a conscientious discharge of duty. Awful will be the end of all those "who obey "not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." But the chiefest torments are reserved for those who, having intruded themselves from worldly motives

into the office of the ministry, make it a mere engine of secular interest or carnal gratification; and who, either through an unpardonable ignorance or a wilful neglect of the duties peculiar to their sacred function, suffer the precious souls of men to perish everlastingly!

ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE.

Grant, O merciful God, that as thine holy Apostle St. James, leaving his father and all that he had, without delay, was obedient to the calling of thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed him; so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow thy holy commandments, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WERE the story of the Apostles and Evangelists distinctly known and circumstantially related, we may suppose that it would afford materials of exquisite pleasure to every Christian mind. But there never arose in the church any historians, like Thucydides and Livy, to illustrate the actions of saints. Heroes and statesmen have their reward here; saints, hereafter. Christ's kingdom must not appear to be of this world: and while large volumes have been filled with the exploits of warriors and the intrigues of statesmen, those men who were the divinely appointed instruments of evangelizing souls, are for the most part unknown *. Even the memoirs of the Apostles and Evangelists, which the New Testament affords, are brief; their acts being no further mentioned than as they are necessary to lead men to Christ, and to illustrate Christianity;

* Milner's History of the Church of Christ, vol. i. p. 113.

and introduced, not for the purpose of gratifying curiosity, but of improving the heart.

These remarks are occasioned by the scantiness of that light which the Scripture has shed on the life and character of St. James. He was the brother of St. John, the son of Zebedee, and a fisherman by occupation. He is styled in ecclesiastical history, St. James the Great, in contradistinction to another of the same name, called James the Less, the son of Alpheus, and the brother of our Lord. By his mother Mary, surnamed Salome, he is supposed to have been related to his divine Master. St. James and St. John were called to be disciples of Christ at the same time with Andrew and Peter, the sons of Jonas; and when the Apostles were selected, they were placed in the catalogue next to the aforesaid brothers. The sons of Zebedee were also of the favoured triumvirate who were admitted to be witnesses of some transactions in our Saviour's life, from which the other nine were excluded,—such as the resuscitation of Jairus' daughter, the interview which took place on the mount of transfiguration, and the gloomy scene in Gethsemane. To them also, as to Peter, was a new name given on their call to the Apostolate; for our Lord surnamed them Boanerges, or the sons of thunder. By this appellation he probably referred to the natural energy and impetuosity of their character, and to the bold and resolute manner in which they should propagate the doctrines of the Gospel, fearing no menaces, and daunted by no opposition: but thundering in the ears of a sleepy and careless world the awful truths of God, awakening the torpid consciences of men by their vehement eloquence, and rending their hearts with

conviction of sin, as the voice of the Lord, in natural thunder, breaketh the cedar-trees, and shivereth in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

After the account which is given of our Apostle's call to the ministry, very little mention is made of him, none indeed apart from his brother John, till ten years after the day of Pentecost, when his martyrdom is concisely related. His conduct was, no doubt, consonant to the name of Boanerges, and such as justified the peculiar honour shewn him by our Lord; but probably the scene of his labours was confined to Jerusalem, and to occasional visits to the rising churches of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. From the circumstance of his being the first object of the persecuting fury of Herod Agrippa, (the son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great, under whose government Christ was born,) a rigid adherent to the Mosaic institutions, we may infer his authority in the church, and the efficacy of his testimony among the people. St. Luke records his martyrdom without detailing any circumstances of it, or adding one remark for the illustration of his character, or as the eulogy of his virtues. Why was so great an Apostle as St. James taken away in the prime of life, in the midst of his successful labours? and why are the particulars of his life and labours unrecorded? God knoweth, though we know not. Incapable as we are of reconciling apparent difficulties, we may rest assured that the works of nature and the dispensations of Providence, proceeding from the grand source of wisdom and order, have all a fitness and harmony, which escape the ken of our limited faculties. Hereafter, what we now deem a blemish, will appear a beauty; and we shall learn to adore what

now we question. Some noble blood might be requisite to witness against the infidelity of the world, and to invigorate the zeal of the church. And what victim more proper could have been selected, than he who had declared his readiness to be baptized with the baptism of his Lord; or what blood more precious than that of this son of thunder? His life and labours, unrecorded on earth, are emblazoned in the annals of eternity, and shall be hereafter published to an assembled world*.

Though the sacred penman has passed over in silence the circumstances of St. James's martyrdom, there is one anecdote respecting it, handed down by ecclesiastical history, which appears to be authentic, and is well worthy of being recorded. The man who had been his accuser, when he saw the readiness with which our Apostle submitted to martyrdom, was struck with remorse; and by one of those sudden conversions which were not infrequent during the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit, was himself turned from the power of Satan unto God, and confessed Christ with great cheerfulness. They were both led to execution; and in the way the accuser asked the Apostle's forgiveness, which he easily obtained. St. James, turning to him, said, "Peace, my son, be to thee," and kissed him. They were both beheaded together. The efficacy of divine grace, and the blessed fruit of holy example, are both illustrated in this story; of which it were to be wished that we knew more than the very scanty account which has been delivered†.

* Christian Observer;—Lives of James and John the Apostles, vol. i.

† See Milner's History of the Church, vol. i. p. 114.

The circumstance in the life of St. James which our collect records, and on which its prayer is founded, demands a further notice than what we have yet taken of it. "Leaving his father and all "that he had, he was without delay obedient to "the calling of the Son of God Jesus Christ."

Our blessed Lord, passing by the sea of Galilee, saw St. James and his brother John in a ship with Zebedee their father, and called them to become his disciples. A divine power accompanied the word, with which, so soon as they heard it, they cheerfully complied, and immediately left all and followed Christ. Our Apostle conferred not with flesh and blood; he disputed not the propriety of Christ's command, entertained no doubt respecting the truth of his promises, made no inquiry into the minute consequences of the undertaking, asked not what troubles and dangers might attend the new employment, but readily surrendered himself to the will of his divine Master, to be employed as he should think fit. The extent of his obedience is the more remarkable, as he left his aged father in the ship behind him. For we find that some others, who received a like call to discipleship, excused themselves from an immediate adherence to Christ, on pretence that they must go and bury their father, or take a final leave of their kindred at home. But no such slight and trivial pretence had any influence on the mind of our Apostle, whose fervent spirit broke through every obstacle to obedience, and abandoned at once all his secular interests and relations that he might follow Christ. Let it not be said, that the desertion of his father was an unnatural act; for, besides the consideration of his leaving servants to take care of his father and assist him

in his business, it is to be remembered, that the command of God is paramount to every other requisition, and supersedes every inferior claim. It is the glory of Abraham's faith, that, when God called him to leave his kindred and his father's house, and to sojourn in a strange land, not knowing whither he went, he obeyed implicitly the divine injunction; as he also did, when the sacrifice of his beloved Isaac was required. It is probable that Zebedee himself sanctioned the conduct of his sons, and would have accompanied them in their attendance on Christ, if his age and other circumstances had not prevented him. And it is very reasonable to suppose, that his sons abundantly compensated for the loss of their personal service, by the instruction which they afforded him in the doctrines of salvation; a supposition, which is greatly strengthened by the known piety of their mother Salome.

On the obedience of St. James to the call of Christ we found an earnest petition for grace, that "we" also, "forsaking all carnal and "worldly affections, may be evermore ready to "follow God's holy commandments, through "Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is indispensably required of all who hear the name of Christ to become his followers. The command is universal, addressed alike to the rich and to the poor, to the young and to the old, "FOLLOW ME." We cannot enjoy the benefits of his death without enlisting ourselves in his service. And, therefore, as all men are sinners and stand in absolute need of a Saviour, it is the interest of all to follow him that they may be real partakers of his great salvation. Every man can discern how great is the folly of a sick patient, who indulges the hope of a

restoration to health, while he rejects the only remedy that can procure it. Decency and morality can never give to a sinner admission into heaven; for in order thereto, obedience to all the commandments of God is peremptorily required. "And this is his commandment, that we believe "in the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" obedience to which will be followed by a cheerful and universal compliance with the precepts of the moral law. Faith in the great atoning sacrifice is indispensably necessary. And this "faith" which "worketh by love" has a constraining power on the soul of its possessor, whereby he is effectually engaged to renounce the world and the flesh, and to "follow the "Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

A constant readiness to "follow the holy com- "mandments of God," forsaking "all worldly "and carnal lusts," is a disposition of soul which divine grace only can produce and maintain. This will be evident, if the solemn declarations of our Lord be duly weighed:—"If any man "come unto me, and hate not" (comparatively speaking) "his father and mother, and all that "he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26. "Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all "that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 33. Were we to judge of the nature of the Christian religion from the conduct of the generality of its professors, we should suppose that it involved no difficulties, imposed no trials, and required no sacrifices, and, consequently, that the petition of our collect was altogether needless. But how different is this supposition from the true state of the case, as represented in our Lord's foregoing declarations! The followers of Christ must renounce their own righteousness

and trust only in him; and this is no easy task to our naturally self-righteous hearts. They must forsake sin in all its shapes, without sparing one darling lust. They must abandon themselves entirely to the guidance of the Word and Spirit of their heavenly Master. But self-denial is always a laborious and painful work. The excision of a right eye, and the amputation of a right hand, are figurative modes of expression employed by our Lord to paint the difficulty and anguish by which it is generally attended. If we determine to follow Christ, we must previously count the cost; and it will be wise to conclude that we may suffer the loss of all for his name's sake. An endeavour to serve two masters, whose commands are so very opposite as those of God and Mammon, of the flesh and Spirit, is a vain attempt.

The Roman soldiers took an oath, which was called *Sacramentum*, to follow their general whithersoever he led them. A Christian also, by the sacramental engagement of his baptism, is bound to follow the Captain of his salvation in a similar manner, and without reserve; or, in other words, "forsaking all worldly and carnal "affections, to be evermore ready to follow God's "holy commandments." Wherever he sees the print of his Master's foot, there he is to place his own. The life of Christ was a life of obedience; and such also is that of all his genuine followers. As every day brings its duties, so every day finds them engaged in an inquiry about what their Lord would have them to do; and in earnest supplications, suggested by a conviction of their own impotency, for grace to enable them to obey his will. Reader, is this your daily work? Are you thus labouring to

walk in the way of his commandments, careless both of the smiles and censures of the world, and deaf to all the sinful claims of the flesh? Without consulting with flesh and blood, do you diligently study his will, to the end that you may fulfil it? And is it your prevailing desire "that Christ may be magnified in your body, "whether it be by life or death?" These are questions which will determine the sincerity of your profession and your prayers.

No man can become a true follower of Christ, so as to "forsake all worldly and carnal lusts," and to be "evermore ready to follow God's holy "commandments," unless he be influenced by almighty grace. This our Lord positively asserts, (John vi. 44,) "No man can come unto me, "except the Father, who hath sent me, draw "him." When St. James, in obedience to the word of command, left his father and all that he had, to follow the despised Nazarene, it is evident that a divine energy inwardly accompanied the external call. A stone suspended in the air without visible support is not a more supernatural and miraculous phenomenon, than a sinner leaving the world in heart and affection to suffer affliction with the people of God. Common reason may persuade a man to become decent and honest; but it can never induce him to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ.

It is natural to the human heart, prone to self-seeking and self-indulgence, to shrink back at the proposal of so great a sacrifice. Our Lord's parable, recorded in Luke xiv. 18, puts this assertion beyond a doubt. Some of our excuses, similar to his who only asked permission to return and bury his father, have an air of plausibility. One is ready to say—"By becoming religious, I

" shall lose my character among my friends, and " in the world."—It is acknowledged that, in consequence of adherence to Christ, you will forfeit the good opinion of the majority of your neighbours, and incur the disgrace of being accounted either an enthusiast or an hypocrite, either disordered in your understanding or perverted in your heart. But what then? Is your reputation or your soul most valuable? Is the good opinion of God, or of the world, to be preferred?——" I have much weighty business on " my head and heart and hands," says another; " and the maintenance of a numerous family " engrosses all my time and attention."—Be it remembered, that fervency of spirit in the service of God is not incompatible with diligence in the prosecution of our secular concerns. And even if it were, a man had better beg his bread from door to door, than beg at last a drop of water in hell to quench a flaming tongue. Religion is worth every thing, or it is worth nothing. Either the Gospel is a cunningly devised fable, or it is our wisdom to make every sacrifice in obedience to its dictates.—You further say, " I sincerely " intend to become a follower of Christ at some " future period." But have you a lease of your life? May not the day of grace slip away before you are aware? Are there not thousands of souls gone into eternity, who had formed such a silly resolution as yours, and yet never carried it into execution? What would you say of the husbandman, who neglected at the proper season to sow his seed? Would his intention of doing it at another time preserve him from hunger and want? Delays are highly dangerous, whenever matters of importance are concerned. Your stock of apologies is not yet exhausted; you

have another, and that the most common and dangerous of all, still behind:—"Will it not be "sufficient, if I pay some *degree* of attention to "religion, though I do not make it THE ONE "THING NEEDFUL?" Our collect tells us, that, forsaking all carnal and worldly affections, we must evermore be ready to follow God's holy commandments; of which this is the sum, "My "son, give me thy heart." The requisition is peremptory, and if this be withheld, all is wrong. If this be devoted to him, all will be right. You must be a decided character. An almost Christian can never enter heaven. You will do well to consider our Lord's awful denunciation to the church at Laodicea, (Rev. iii. 16,) "Because thou "art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will "spew thee out of my mouth."

The claims of worldly or carnal affections, however importunate, afford no valid excuse for the neglect of religion or disobedience to the holy commandments of God. These claims may be disregarded without loss; but if religion be slighted, the loss will be eternal. Mention a thing which has no relation to religion, and you mention a trifle of no consequence. Did Christ relinquish his glory and become poor for you, and will you not relinquish the baubles of time for him? Is there any sacrifice which you can make, worthy to be compared with the immense sacrifice which he made for you? If your heart be rightly disposed towards him, you will cheerfully say, "Lord, all that I have is "thine." Oh, consider the value of your own soul! What was the estimate that Christ formed of its value, when he hung on the cross for its redemption? What is the estimate of those blessed spirits who rejoice over every sinner

that repenteth, and who weep, if angels can weep, over the sin and folly of those who indulge their worldly and carnal affections, and "follow" not "God's holy commandments" with an undivided heart? What has been the judgment of the wisest and best of men, of patriarchs and prophets, of apostles, martyrs, and confessors, in all ages? And what will be your own feelings on the bed of death? Were you to ask the saints in glory, whether heaven be worth the sacrifices which they made in their way to it, they would start with indignation at the proposal of such a doubt. And were you to interrogate the damned in hell, whether the past profits and pleasures of the world, and the gratifications of the flesh, were a sufficient compensation for the loss of the soul, they would all, with deep and heart-rending groans, make answer, "No! no!" O that these considerations may inspire us with fervency in praying, "that, forsaking all "worldly and carnal affections, we may be ever-"more ready to follow God's holy command-"ments, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE.

O Almighty and everlasting God, who didst give to thine Apostle Bartholomew grace, truly to believe and to preach thy word; Grant, we beseech thee, unto thy church, to love that word which he preached, and both to preach and receive the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE notice which is taken of St. Bartholomew in the sacred history, is still more concise than that which is taken of St. James; unless, indeed, we concur with many learned men, both ancients and moderns *, in supposing that Bartholomew was another name of Nathanael, of whom a most delightful and instructive account is to be found in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel. The reasons on which this supposition is built are such as give it an air of high probability, though they do not amount to demonstration. It has been observed that as St. John in his Gospel never mentions Bartholomew in the number of the Apostles, the other Evangelists take no notice of Nathanael; from which it is inferred that these are different names of the same person. And it is further remarkable that, as in St. John's Gospel Philip and Nathanael are mentioned as having gone to Christ

* See Lightfoot's Horæ Hebr.; Dr. Hammond; Poli. Syn. &c.

together, so in the other Evangelists Philip and Bartholomew are constantly placed together without a single variation. Having been called to the apostleship at the same time, they are joined together in the apostolic catalogue, as also they are afterwards in the writings of the church. But that which strengthens the supposition greatly is this, that we find Nathanael particularly mentioned with the other Apostles, to whom our Lord appeared at the sea of Tiberias after his resurrection; where were assembled together Simon Peter, and Thomas, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the two sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples, who probably were Andrew and Philip. Now that by *disciples*, is here meant *Apostles*, is evident; partly from the names which are specified, and partly because it is said that this was "the third time "that Jesus appeared to his disciples;" for it is plain that the two foregoing appearances were confined to the Apostles.

Had Nathanael been no more than an ordinary disciple, what reason can be given why, in filling up the vacancy in the apostolic college made by the death of Judas, he, who appears from our Lord's commendation of his character to have been so well qualified for the office, should not have been proposed as well as either Barnabas or Matthias? The name Bartholomew moreover seems to be a patronymic, like Barjona, one of Peter's appellations, and to have referred to his relative capacity either as a son or scholar. Tholmai was a name not uncommon among the Jews.

Proceeding, then, on the supposition that our Apostle was the same person who is by St. John called Nathanael, we have a most delightful

account of his character and conduct, which will illustrate the assertion of our collect, that "grace" was given him "truly to believe and "preach the word of God." Like the rest of the Apostles, he was a Galilean, and an inhabitant of the town of Cana. The Scripture does not mention his occupation, but it is probable that he was a fisherman. He was first introduced to our Lord by St. Philip, who told him that the long expected Messiah, that illustrious and extraordinary character who had been so often foretold and described by Moses and the Prophets, had at length appeared, and that he had seen him in the person of "Jesus of "Nazareth, the son of Joseph." To this Nathanael objected, his prejudice against the place being so great that he concluded Philip must be mistaken, and therefore said unto him, "Can any good thing come out of" a place so mean and despicable as "Nazareth?" To which Philip replied, "Come and see"—suffer not yourself to be the slave of prejudice, but judge for yourself. So soon as our Lord saw him, he pronounced this eulogy on his character, "Behold "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile," —a man of "simplicity and godly sincerity," —one who is indeed numbered among the people of God, and is worthy of his descent from Jacob. (See Gen. xxv. 27; compare Rev. iii. 9; and John viii. 39.) Nathanael was greatly surprised at this unexpected salutation, and such a testimony concerning his character borne by one whom he had never seen before; and, under the influence of astonishment, he asked, "Whence "knowest thou me?" To which our Lord answered, "Before that Philip called thee, when "thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." It

is supposed that Nathanael had retired to the shade of a fig-tree for the purpose of devotion, when Philip interrupted him with the glad tidings which he brought him; (comp. Zech. iii. 10;) and perhaps his mind had been engaged in contemplation and prayer respecting the "redemption in Israel," for which every awakened mind was then waiting. On this declaration made by Christ, Nathanael was so fully convinced of his divinity, that he cried out, "Rabbi! Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel,"—that divine personage whom we have been taught to expect in these sublime and august characters—the promised Messiah. To which confession of faith, Jesus replied, "Dost thou believe me to be the Son of God, merely because I told thee that I saw thee under the fig-tree? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man*."

From this narrative it appears, if we identify Nathanael and Bartholomew, "that God gave to his Apostle Bartholomew, grace truly to believe his word." And no doubt can be entertained whether he faithfully preached that word which he thus received with so much candour and simplicity. In the inspired volume we have no account of his ministerial labours; and that which ecclesiastical history affords is very brief and imperfect. That he went as far

* If this declaration refer to the ascension and the vision of angels which accompanied it, it affords an additional proof that Nathanael is to be identified with St. Bartholomew; for no other person was present at the ascension, except the eleven Apostles.

as India (by which is meant the further India) or that part of it which lies next to Asia Minor, is owned by all. It is said that St. Matthew's Gospel was found in the Asian Ethiopia by a subsequent missionary, which tradition reported to have been brought thither by St. Bartholomew.

After labouring in these parts of the world he returned to the more western and northern parts of Asia. We hear of him at Hierapolis in Phrygia, in company with St. Philip, instructing its inhabitants in the principles of Christianity, and convincing them of the folly of their blind idolatries. He appears to have suffered martyrdom by crucifixion at Albanople, in the greater Armenia.

On the introductory notice which, in our collect, is taken of St. Bartholomew, we found a prayer to God, that "his church may love the "truth which he preached, and both preach and "receive the same, through Jesus Christ our "Lord."

What the truth was which St. Bartholomew preached, we can be at no loss to determine from the sermons and letters of the other Apostles, though we have nothing to direct us from the pen of Bartholomew himself. For there was no dissonance in the doctrine of the Apostles. They all preached the doctrines of the fall, of redemption by the blood of Christ, and of sanctification by his spirit. They all declared, that "there is no other name under heaven "given among men whereby we must be saved, "but the name of Jesus Christ." The necessity of "repentance towards God, and of faith "towards our Lord Jesus Christ," was the sum and substance of the testimony which they bore.

They were not "the apes of Epictetus," but "published the word of reconciliation, and pro-"pounded the terms of peace and pardon to "the penitent*;" assuring their hearers, that by Jesus Christ "all who believe are justified "from all things from which they could not be "justified by the law of Moses" any more than by the tenets of heathen philosophy.

The necessity of praying that the professing church of God may love the truth which the Apostles preached, is evident from various considerations. The paucity of hearers in the generality of our congregations, compared with the population of our parishes, demonstrates that the prayer is not unnecessary to be offered on behalf of the British branch of the catholic church. For it shews that great numbers of our people, like Gallio of old, care for none of these things. And the objections which are raised against the truth by multitudes of persons, prove at once the ignorance of apostolic doctrine which prevails among us, and the hostility of the carnal mind thereto. "That man is justified by faith, with-"out the works of the law," (a position which is "the stone of stumbling and rock of offence," among multitudes who claim alliance with the church,) "was the uniform doctrine of the first "reformers. It is a far more ancient doctrine: "it was the doctrine of the whole college of "Apostles. It is more ancient still: it was the "doctrine of the prophets. It is older than the "prophets: it was the religion of the patriarchs." And this "faith is the first principle of that "communion between the believer's soul and

* Bishop Horsley's Charge, p. 8.

"the divine Spirit, on which the whole of our "spiritual life depends*."

We proceed to pray that the church may preach and receive the word which our Apostle preached. This is an effect which will follow from the love of the truth. For if the ministers of the church love the apostolic doctrine, they will preach it with zeal; and if the people love it, they will receive it with cordiality. A defect in preaching or receiving it proves an enmity to it.

As the propriety of using this prayer with relation to our own church involves a very delicate subject, it may be less exceptionable to state the ground of this propriety in the language of those persons whose testimony will be rendered credible and authoritative by the high station which they have held in the church. The original author of our collect, whoever he was, and our reformers who adopted it into their compilation†, no doubt, perceived the impossibility of maintaining by any human efforts an uniformity of evangelic doctrine in all the successive ministers of a national church, and a cordiality to that doctrine in all its members; and have therefore taught us to look up to God for a continuation of orthodoxy in the pulpit, and of faith in the pews.

Whether such a prayer be necessary in our own day, will appear by the testimony of our own prelates.

Archbishop Secker, in his first Charge, addressed to the clergy of the diocese of Canter-

* Bishop Horsley's Charge in the year 1790, p. 28–30.

† Our present collect differs a little, but not materially, from that which is found in King Edward's Liturgy.

bury, expresses himself thus:—"To improve the "people effectually to their future happiness, as "well as to silence false accusers, you must be "assiduous in teaching the principles, not only "of virtue and natural religion, but of the Gos- "pel; and of the Gospel, not as almost explained "away by modern refiners, but 'as the truth is "'in Jesus;' as it is taught by the church of "which you are members; as you have engaged "by your subscriptions and declarations that you "will teach it yourselves. You must preach to "them faith in the ever-blessed Trinity: and "vindicate, when it is requisite, those parts of "our creeds and offices which relate to that "article, from the very unjust imputations of "absurdity and uncharitableness which have "been cast upon them. You must set forth the "original corruption of our nature; our redemp- "tion, 'according to God's eternal purpose in "'Christ,' by the sacrifice of the cross; our "sanctification, by the influences of the divine "Spirit; the insufficiency of our own good works, "and the efficacy of faith to salvation.

"The truth I fear is, that many, if not most "of us, have dwelt too little on these doctrines "in our sermons:—partly from not having studied "theology deeply enough to treat of them ably "and beneficially: God grant it may never have "been for want of inwardly experiencing their "importance. But whatever be the cause, the "effect has been lamentable. Our people have "grown less and less mindful, first, of the distin- "guishing articles of their creed, then, as will "always be the case, of that one which they hold "in common with the heathens; have forgot in "effect their Creator, as well as their Redeemer "and Sanctifier; seldom or never seriously wor-

" shipping him, or thinking of the state of their " souls in relation to him; but flattering them- " selves, that what they are pleased to call a moral " and harmless life, though far from being either, " is ' the one thing needful.' "

Bishop Horsley, in the Charge to which a frequent reference has been made in these volumes, considers infidelity as an increasing evil among us; and attributes its increase to a defect in inculcating the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. He says, that our sermons in the present day are too much divested " of the genuine spirit " and savour of Christianity," and approach too nearly " to mere moral essays." But we need not cite more from this admirable charge, as a considerable part has been incorporated with former Essays.

" Of late times," says the late excellent Bishop of Norwich, Dr. Horne, " there hath been a " prejudice in favour of good moral preaching; " as if the people might do very well, or even " better, without the knowledge of the Christian " mysteries; a good moral life being the end of " all teaching. The enemies of Christianity, " taking advantage of this prejudice, have made " a total separation between the works of religion " and its doctrines; pleading the example and " authority of some of our divines. And it " must not be concealed that, by delivering cold " inanimate lectures on moral virtue, indepen- " dent of Christianity, many of our clergy of late " years have lost themselves very much in the " estimation of the religious part of the laity."

The present Bishop of Durham, speaking on the same subject, says, " The doctrines which " you are thus bound by your duty to God, to " the laws of your country, and the engagements

" of your profession, to inculcate and maintain, " have been of late years too much neglected: " as if doctrines of faith were subordinate parts " of Christianity. Yet all that distinguishes " Christianity from other religions, is doctrinal." " But what," the bishop asks, " is the Gospel? " Not mere precepts of morality. The good " tidings are the hopes and consolations which " are offered by the new covenant, and rest on " the satisfaction made for us, not by ourselves, " but by our Redeemer. To preach the Gospel, " therefore, is to preach the doctrines of satisfac- " tion by the death of Christ; that is, the doc- " trines of atonement and redemption: and to " preach them to the poor, is to preach them to " the congregations from which they have been " often studiously excluded." In another charge, he ascribes the present luke-warmness in religion to " an infrequency in the pulpit of those doctrines " which constitute the peculiar doctrines of Chris- " tianity."

If these learned and excellent prelates have not been guilty of a gross mistake, there is much need in our own day for beseeching God to " grant unto his church to love that word which " St. Bartholomew preached, and both to preach " and to receive the same." And oh, that the spirit of every reader may be excited by the survey which has been taken, to join with increased fervency in the collect which has been under our consideration! And may God hear and answer us, " through Jesus Christ our Lord. " Amen."

ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE'S DAY.

O Almighty God, who by thy blessed Son didst call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle and Evangelist; grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth, with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

ST. MATTHEW, who was also named Levi, was by birth "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," though by his occupation a Roman officer; for both his names shew that his extraction was purely Jewish. He was probably a Galilean, and is said to have been born at Nazareth where our Lord was educated. He was the son of Alpheus and of Mary, a sister or relation of the blessed Virgin. His business was that of a publican or toll-gatherer to the Romans, an office of bad repute among the Jews. Among the Romans it was esteemed a place of power and credit, which was not commonly conferred on any persons but Roman knights. These officers, being sent into the provinces to collect the several species of tribute due to the government, were accustomed to employ the natives under them, as being best acquainted with the affairs and customs of their own country. Two things concurred to render this office odious to the Jews.

First, the persons who managed it were usually covetous and guilty of unjust exaction. For as they farmed the customs of the Romans, they were strongly tempted by their situation to employ various methods of extortion, in order that they might be able to pay their rent and enrich themselves. Zaccheus, the chief of these farmers, seems to have been conscious of guilt in the discharge of his office, when, after his conversion, he proposed to make a four-fold restitution to all whom he had fraudulently injured. Upon this account the publicans became infamous even among the Gentile subjects of the Roman empire, who frequently speak of them as thieves and public robbers, and worse members of a community, more voracious and destructive in a city, than wild beasts in a forest. The second thing which made the office of a publican so odious to the Jews was this, that the tribute which was imposed on them was not only burthensome to their estates, but also an affront to the liberty of the nation. For they looked on themselves as a free-born people, who had been invested with this privilege of immunity from tribute immediately by God himself, and they regarded their taxation as a daily and standing proof of their enslaved condition; a consideration which of all others was the most galling to their minds, and which betrayed them into many unfortunate rebellions against the Romans, and at length terminated in their total ruin. To this it may be added that the publicans were not only obliged by the nature of their occupation to have frequent converse with the Gentiles, which the Jews held to be unlawful and abominable, but, being Jews themselves, they rigorously exacted of their brethren the Roman dues, whereby

they seemed to conspire with the Romans to entail perpetual slavery on their own nation.

On these accounts publicans became so universally odious to the Jewish nation, that it was considered unlawful to do them any office of common kindness and courtesy; nay, it was not thought sinful to cheat a publican, and that under the sanction of a solemn oath. It was highly discreditable to eat or drink, to walk or travel with them. Publicans were treated as common thieves and robbers; and money received from them was prohibited from being mingled with the rest of a man's property, as it was supposed to have been obtained by means of rapine and violence. They were not admitted as evidences in any cause; and so infamous were they deemed, that they were not only banished from all religious communion, but also were shunned in all civil and commercial engagements as the pests of their country, whose communications were infectious, and as vile as those of the very heathens. Hence there was a common proverb among them, "Take not a wife from "that family wherein there is a publican; for "they are all publicans," that is, thieves, robbers, and wicked persons. To this proverbial usage our Lord refers when, speaking of a contumacious sinner, whom neither private reproof nor the public censures and admonitions of the church can reclaim, he says, "Let him be unto thee as "a heathen man and a publican." And elsewhere publicans and sinners are joined together as persons of an equally vile reputation.

Of this odious office and character was our Apostle St. Matthew. And his particular business seems to have been the collection of custom from the exports and imports on the sea of

Galilee, and the tribute due from passengers thereon. For this purpose his office was by the sea-side, where he "sat at the receipt of "custom."

Our Lord having cured a well known paralytic, retired out of Capernaum to walk by the sea-side, where he taught the people that flocked after him. Here he saw Matthew sitting in his custom-office, whom he called to come and follow him. The man was rich, was engaged in a very profitable business, and was a wise and prudent person, no one of a weak understanding being qualified for such an office. He understood, no doubt, what a compliance with the call of Christ would cost him—that he must exchange wealth for poverty, and all the comforts of opulence for the hardships which must be felt in the train of a poor and despised master who had not where to lay his head. But he overlooked all these considerations, and abandoned all his worldly interests and relations, that he might become the disciple of Christ. It is probable that he was previously acquainted in some measure with our Saviour's person and doctrine, or at least had heard of his miracles, since he lived at Capernaum, the place of our Lord's usual residence, where his sermons and miracles had been so frequent, that our Apostle's mind, as it may well be supposed, was prepared to receive those deep and abiding impressions which the divine call now made on his heart.

For the purpose of shewing that he was not discontented with his new situation, and that he did not consider himself to be a loser by the exchange, St. Matthew made a great dinner at his house for our Lord and his disciples, to which he invited his friends, and especially those of his

own profession, piously hoping that they also might be captivated by our Lord's company and conversation. The Pharisees, whose malignant eyes were constantly watching to find or create some occasion of censuring our Lord's conduct, began to suggest to his disciples that it ill became so pure and holy a person as their Master pretended to be, thus familiarly to converse with the worst of men, with publicans and sinners, persons who were infamous to a proverb. To which our Lord replied, that "they who are "whole need not a physician, but they who "are sick;" that his company was most suitable among those persons, the necessities of whose souls required it, that God himself prefers acts of mercy and charity, especially those which are administered to the souls of men, before any ritual observances, and that the main design of his appearance in the world was "not to call "the righteous," those who proudly conceit themselves to be so, "but sinners," self-accused offenders, "to repentance" and salvation.

After his election to the Apostolate, St. Matthew continued with the other disciples till our Lord's ascension, and then for the eight following years preached the Gospel in Judea only. After this, being about to remove into the Gentile world, he was entreated by the Jewish converts to commit to writing the history of our Saviour's life and actions, and to leave it among them as a standing record of what he had preached to them. With this request he complied, and composed the Gospel which bears his name. It is doubtful what became of him after this period. It is, however, generally supposed that he preached the Gospel laboriously and successfully in Ethiopia, and finished his useful

career at Naddaber, a city of that country, but by what kind of death is altogether uncertain.

The conversion of our Apostle affords a striking instance both of the rich grace and almighty power of God. If we reflect on the previous circumstances of his life, we shall see that he was deeply immersed in the world, and under strong temptations still to pursue it as his portion. He was engaged in a very lucrative employ, was supported by the power and favour of the Roman government, and was under the influence of covetous inclinations which had been confirmed by long habits. O how rich was that grace which selected such a person for one of its happy monuments! how great that power which, in an instant, stopped the rapid current of worldly propensity, and diverted it from its ancient channel—which gave a new bias to the affections, and caused them to flow in another and opposite direction! No sooner did Christ call than St. Matthew obeyed. Without the least scruple or hesitation, he left all and followed him. All his pleasing and enticing prospects of sublunary wealth and grandeur disappeared at once, when the light of truth burst on his mind, even as the deceitful fog-bank is dissipated by the rays of the ascending sun. He not only relinquished the opulence he had acquired, and the prospect of an increase, but voluntarily determined to expose himself to all the shame and sufferings which attended a connexion with the despised Jesus.

From the grace which was shewn to St. Matthew in his call from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle and Evangelist, we take encouragement to offer a petition for ourselves—that God would "grant us grace to forsake all covetous

" desires and inordinate love of riches, and to " follow his Son Jesus Christ."

By our baptismal vow we have engaged to renounce the world, that is, not to seek our happiness, nor to make up our portion in it—to maintain the temper of pilgrims and strangers upon earth, by not laying up for ourselves treasures on earth, where the moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal, but by laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Such is our baptismal engagement. But oh, how difficult is its fulfilment! Who is there that has not reason to mourn over a broken vow, when the extent of the stipulation is compared with his own spirit and conduct? Who is there that has not been influenced by " covetous desires " and an inordinate love of riches?" Or, in other words, Where is the man to be found, who has not preferred the world to God, its smiles to his approbation, its wealth to his grace?

If, then, not only " the men of the world, who " have their portion in this life," are implicated in the guilt of covetousness, but if even the faithful few who have chosen God for their portion, and whose affections are set on things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, are not exempt from the criminality of inordinate desires,—if these latter are conscious of an undue attachment to this present evil world, O how necessary and proper is our prayer for grace to wean us therefrom! Let the reader inquire, whether it be not a suitable and needful petition for himself to offer. Do you not find by painful experience, that, although your judgment is convinced that God only can confer on you true happiness, you are prone to seek it in the riches of this world? Is there no tendency to envy, and

no dissatisfaction with the allotments of providence, in the bosoms of the poor members of our church? No pride, self-elation, and forgetfulness of God in her more prosperous and opulent children? And is there not a necessity that all of them should devoutly join in this act of supplication? Certain it is that no one will deem it needless who is possessed of self-knowledge, obtained by comparing the emotions of his own heart with the holy law of God.

The evil of "covetous desires and an inordinate "love of riches" is very great. "Covetousness "is" expressly declared to be "idolatry," (Col. iii. 5,) because it attributes to the creature that which is the exclusive prerogative of the Creator, the power of satisfying the rational soul and of making it happy. We need not therefore wonder to find that covetous persons are expressly named among those who are excluded from the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. vi. 10; Eph. v. 5.) "To be "carnally minded," whatever earthly object be the idol of the soul, "is death," not only meritoriously, but also efficiently, for it disqualifies the soul for the enjoyment of God, and is therefore a necessary cause of banishment from his presence.

That genuine believers have need to "watch "and pray" against this universal and destructive evil, appears from the solemn cautions and exhortations addressed by our Lord and his Apostles to true disciples. To them their divine Master has given this affectionate warning, "Take heed "and beware of covetousness;" which is enforced by the awful parable of the rich fool. (Luke xii. 15, &c.) "Let your conversation," saith St. Paul, writing to the believing Hebrews, "be "without covetousness; and be content with such

" things as ye have." Heb. xiii. 5. And the reason of these exhortations is cogent; " for the " covetous man, who is an idolater, shall not " inherit the kingdom of God." Eph. v. 5. Of this sin there are many gradations. The carnal and unconverted heart, in every instance, is enslaved by it, for the world is the God it adores. The regenerate themselves are not free from its malign influence, for they groan, being burthened, under a consciousness of inordinate affection: and if any man feel not the propensity of his heart thereto, and consequently is insensible of any necessity that exists for his joining heartily in our present collect, he is assuredly under the dominion of this sin, and totally ignorant of his own unhappy state.

In order that we may " follow the Son of God " Jesus Christ," our hearts must be delivered from the dominion of " all covetous desires and the " inordinate love of riches." For we " cannot " serve God and Mammon." If we would be his disciples, and partake of the blessings of his kingdom, we must, in heart and affection, " sell all " that we have." Matt. xix. 21. We must be " crucified to the world, and the world must " be crucified to us." Let us therefore pray that we may regard it without being captivated by its charms, any more than the spectator of an executed criminal would be by the aspect of a countenance deformed by the agonies of death*, and be no more affected by worldly objects, than a crucified person would be by the prospects which his dying eyes might behold from the cross on which he was suspended.

* Mundum abominor acsi cadaver esset latronis crucifixi. —*Poli. Syn.* in Gal. vi. 14.

Such is the state of indifference to the world, and alienation of heart from it, to which every true disciple aspires, and for the attainment of which he prays. Now it is a self-evident axiom, that nothing but almighty power can enable us to "forsake all covetous desires and the inordinate "love of riches." For the exertion of this power, therefore, on our behalf, we are taught earnestly to pray; that hearing the effectual call of the sinner's friend, we may, like St. Matthew, forsake all and follow him.

What is implied in following Christ we have explained in a former Essay. We shall therefore only observe here, that Christ must be known before he can be followed with cordiality of affection. For what man in his senses would follow an unknown guide? Were a stranger to propose to us a long, difficult, and dangerous journey to some distant country,—were he to promise us as an inducement an immense treasure for the reward of our labour,—we should immediately ask, Who is this person? Is his veracity to be depended on? Is he really our friend? Has he power to fulfil his promises? All these inquiries would wisdom dictate; for, were they neglected, we might quit a present certainty for a future uncertainty, incur toil and labour for nothing, or perish in the attempt. Let the character of Christ, his grace, his ability to bless us, his faithfulness to his word, be investigated, and the scrutiny will issue in the complete satisfaction of the mind which makes it. It will be found that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, and to keep that which we commit to him against the great day. Every sacrifice which we are required to make on his account, will be richly compensated by

the present consolations of his Spirit, and more abundantly by the final enjoyment of his glory. We may rest assured that we shall meet with no disappointment in forsaking all for him, since he is faithful who hath promised, and since he "liveth and reigneth with the Father and the "Holy Ghost, one God, world without end."

ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

O Everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the services of angels and men in a wonderful order; mercifully grant that, as thy holy angels always do thee service in heaven, so by thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

On this day the church expresses her thankfulness to God for the many benefits she derives from the ministry of holy angels, and implores a continuance of their important ministrations on her behalf. And as St. Michael is mentioned in Scripture as an angel of great power and dignity, and as especially engaged in watching over the interests of the church, he is particularised in her grateful memorial of divine goodness*.

From the title of our collect it is evident that our church supposes the personage who in Scripture bears the name of Michael to be a created angel, though one of the highest order. There are, however, many learned men, who rather suppose that Michael is a name of the uncreated Angel of the covenant, to whose gracious office towards his church they think the actions attributed to Michael may well be assigned; and that the interpretation of the name, *who is as God*,

* See Wheatly, p. 235, Oxford edition.

strengthens this opinion. (Comp. Dan. x. 13; Jude 9; Rev. xii. 7*.)

'Concerning the nature and office of those incorporeal intelligences whom we denominate angels, we can have no information but what is derived from Scripture; beyond which if we venture, we plunge into a boundless ocean of vain conjecture. On this subject both Jews and Christians have indulged in speculations which are wholly futile and unprofitable.

The term *angel*, is a name of office, and signifies no more than a messenger, whether embodied or unembodied; and it is applied to the agents of material nature, to men, to created intelligent spirits, and to the second person of Jehovah, the incarnate Son of God. To distinguish accurately whether the one or the other of these is intended by the word, as used in some passages of Scripture, is by no means an easy task.

That there are unembodied spirits, distinct from the souls of men, and from the ever-blessed God, is clear from many parts of the inspired volume which need not to be cited here, since every reader will recollect them. A part of these are fallen from holiness and happiness, having lost their first estate, and "left their "own habitation;" and are "reserved in chains "of darkness unto the judgment of the great "day." There is, however, "an innumerable "company of angels," who have persevered in their duty to God, and are the subjects of our present act of prayer and praise.

These blessed spirits excel in knowledge and in strength; (see 2 Sam. xiv. 20; Psal. ciii. 20;

* See Poli. Syn. in Dan. x. 13. See also Bishop Horsley's Sermon on Dan. iv. 17, vol. ii. Sermon xxix.

2 Thess. i. 7,) and their number is past calculation. That they are "constituted and appointed in a "wonderful order," (by which it may be supposed, that the collect refers to a diversity of intellect, rank, and ministration,) may be inferred from what the Apostle says, Col. i. 16, where he distributes them into "thrones, dominions, prin-"cipalities, and powers." Any attempt further to investigate this mysterious subject would incur the guilt of "intruding into those things which "we have not seen, vainly puffed up by our "fleshly mind*."

We know, however, that among men the providence of God has ordained and constituted a wonderful order, which is highly conducive to the promotion of the divine glory and to the happiness of mankind. All anarchy is inconsistent with his plan, and destructive of human happiness. Liberty and equality, whether in church or state, are terms which imply rebellion against him and the overthrow of his constitution. Subordination and dependence are essential to human welfare; nor can we enough admire the wisdom of God in linking us together in society, and in the appointment of civil and ecclesiastical government. From the harmony which prevails throughout creation, and from the titles given in Scripture to celestial beings, we infer, that something similar to what we observe among men prevails also in heaven, under the supreme dominion of the King of kings.

There is also a mutual connexion between angels and men. For angels derive their happiness

* Quid inter se distent hæc vocabula, dicant qui possunt. Si tamen possunt probare quod dicunt, ego me ista ignorare confiteor.—*August.* Et alibi: differre inter se aliquid credo; sed quid inter se differant, nescio.

in part from the redemption of mankind by our Lord Jesus Christ, as we shall presently shew, and we are indebted subordinately to them for many benefits which God confers upon us. There is a unity in the divine scheme of creation and redemption, which connects all the parts, and will finally make the universe a theatre of adoration.

Leaving this obscure subject, we proceed to consider the petition of our collect; wherein we beseech God to "grant, that, as his holy angels "always do him service in heaven, so by his "appointment they may succour and defend us "on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In this petition it is asserted that the angels always do service unto God in heaven. Of what nature that service is, except in one particular, we know nothing. Probably that comprehends the whole of the service which they there perform. They are engaged continually in the noble and delightful work of praising and glorifying his holy name, For this end they were at first created; on this sublime office they entered so soon as they had received their being, when "the morning-stars sang together, and all the "sons of God shouted for joy." Job xxxviii. 7. In this blessed employ their heaven consists—an employ, in which eternity will be occupied without weariness or satiety. For so vast is the glory and excellence of that adorable Being who is the object of their praise, and so immense their obligations to him, that their theme can never be exhausted; and as they are perfectly holy and perfectly happy, no lassitude can ever arise, but new pleasures must for ever spring from the beatific vision of the Triune Jehovah, whose "name only is excellent and whose praise is "above heaven and earth." Grateful adoration

is the breath of their life: and as the body when in a sound state, and placed in a pure atmosphere, finds no difficulty in the act of respiration, but derives all its satisfactions therefrom; so in heaven, the atmosphere of divine love, the blessed inhabitants "cease not day and night, "saying, *Holy, Holy, Holy,* is the Lord of "hosts."

The wonders of creation and providence, as exhibited both towards themselves and man, doubtless, form in part the subject of their songs. Their own creation and preservation, and all the blessings of the life which they live, the exalted endowments they have received, the capacities which they possess, and their conservation "as "elect angels" in fidelity and bliss, when so many of their pristine number have fallen—these benefits, none of which are self-derived, but all of which are streams issuing from one divine fountain, afford a theme for song which is ever new. We know also that the discoveries of divine goodness which have been made to the human race, tune their harps. For as we are their fellow-creatures, formed by the same almighty hand, and originally destined to be "helpers of their "joy," they are interested in our welfare. As they resemble God, we may be sure that the most exalted charity fills their bosoms: so that, as far as angels are capable of suffering, they "mourn "with them that mourn, and rejoice with them "that rejoice." When the Redeemer of lost mankind appeared on earth, "a multitude of the "heavenly host praised God, saying, Glory to "God in the highest, and on earth peace, good "will towards men." Into the mysteries of redemption they look with ardent desire and holy admiration; and "unto the principalities

" and powers in heavenly places is made known " by the church the manifold wisdom of God." They hailed the Redeemer with new Hallelujahs on his return to his throne in glory, after the completion of his redeeming work; for on that occasion his train was filled by " twenty thousand " chariots of God, even thousands of angels," who saluted him as " the King of glory, the " Lord of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle." We may also suppose that every fresh instance of mercy shewn by God to his church, or to any individual member of it, is known in heaven and excites new praises; for we are informed that " the angels of God rejoice over every sinner " that repenteth."

We are also led to believe that the angels who never sinned derived personal advantage from the work of our redeeming God, and therefore are personally interested in his triumphs. For it seems probable, that they have derived therefrom a confirmation in holiness and happiness. St. Paul says, that " God hath made known " unto us the mystery of his will, according to " his good pleasure, which he purposed in him- " self; that in the dispensation of the fulness " of times, he might gather together in one all " things in Christ, both which are in heaven, " and which are in earth, even in him." Eph. i. 9, 10. And, in his epistle to the Colossians, he adds, " It pleased the Father that in Christ " should all fulness dwell; and having made " peace through the blood of his cross, by him " to reconcile all things to himself, whether " they be things in earth or things in heaven." Chap. i, 19. There is therefore the utmost equity in the requisition that to our Lord Jesus Christ " every knee should bow, of things in heaven,

" and things in earth, and things under the earth;
" and that every tongue should confess that Jesus
" Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
Phil. ii. 10, 11.

Bishop Davenant, speaking on the second of these texts*, says, " The angels for Christ's sake " are confirmed in grace, and established in the " divine favour, so that it is now plainly impossi- " ble that any enmity should intervene between " them and God. The establishment of angels " therefore in divine grace through Christ, is the " same thing as the reconciliation of men through " the same Christ. Nor can we doubt that the " angels themselves need the grace of Christ " the Redeemer,—the grace of confirmation and " exaltation, though not, properly speaking, the " grace of reconciliation. For since they are " creatures, it was impossible for them to be in " their own nature exempt from the danger of " falling. Besides this, the beatific and glorious " union with God, which the blessed angels " enjoy in eternal life, is a benefit that transcends " the merit of any creature; and therefore the " angels themselves are not admitted into this " ineffable joy of divine fruition, but on account " of their connexion with Christ, the head both " of angels and men; in consequence of which " the Apostle gives the title of *elect* to the blessed " angels. (1 Tim. v. 21.) Now the election " either of men or angels out of Christ is a " thing unintelligible.—From hence, therefore, it " is manifest that the grace of Christ the mediator " is necessary to the happiness even of angels, " not for the purpose of justification or absolu- " tion from sin, but of confirmation in divine

* Expositio Epistolæ Pauli ad Colossenses, p. 107.

" love, and of exaltation to a glorious and per-
" manent participation of God, which surpasses
" the ability and dignity of created nature."

If to the benefits of creation are added those which the angels derive from the mediation of their and our Lord Jesus Christ,—if with us they are participants of the grace that flows from the Incarnate God,—we need not wonder at what St. John saw and heard, as it is described, Rev. v. 11–14:—" I beheld and I heard the voice
" of many angels round about the throne, and
" the beasts, and the elders: and the number
" of them was ten thousand times ten thousand,
" and thousands of thousands; saying with a
" loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,
" to receive power, and riches, and strength, and
" honour, and glory, and blessing. And every
" creature which is in heaven, and on the earth,
" and such as are in the sea, and all that are in
" them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour,
" and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth
" upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever
" and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen.
" And the four and twenty elders fell down, and
" worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."

Thus God's " holy angels always do him ser-
" vice in heaven." It is their delight to do his will, to execute his commands, and to glorify his name. On this circumstance we found a prayer, that " by God's appointment they may
" succour and defend us on earth, through Jesus
" Christ our Lord."

Our petition is fully sanctioned by the declarations and descriptions of the word of God. For as the angels were employed in various instances to " succour and defend" the church and its members under the Old Testament dispensa-

tion; so in like manner they ministered to Christ, personally considered, during his state of humiliation, from the period of his incarnation to that of his ascension; and they are also said to be "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for "them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. i. 14.

We have no means of ascertaining, nor need we wish to ascertain, how far the ordinary ministry of angels extends. Whether they are employed in any respect for the preservation of our corporeal life and comfort, or in opposing the stratagems of our enemy the devil, we shall not inquire. It is sufficient to justify our prayer, that God certainly makes use of their ministry for the benefit of his church. And it is enough to give entire satisfaction to our minds, that, either mediately or immediately, "the Lord "careth for us," and has promised to make "all "things work together for our good."

While much comfort is derivable from the doctrine of angelic ministry, soberly received and contemplated, there is a necessity for caution that we do not carry it so far as to set aside the immediate influence or overruling providence of God. Our church therefore reminds us that all the succour and defence which the angels afford us, are afforded by his "appointment." They are only instruments—he is the agent. He loves his people too well to entrust them to any finite care, however superior to their own. Jehovah is "the Keeper of Israel," whose "help is laid on "One, mighty to save."

We must therefore remember that whatever succour and defence we receive by divine appointment through the ministry of angels, the praise of all is due, undiminished, to him whose

servants they are. We are allowed to esteem them as our friends, and to maintain communion with them as the friends of their Lord and ours. But we are to regard them only as the instruments which God employs for our good.

It is our privilege, while we join in this collect of our church, to anticipate the happy moment when our souls, like that of Lazarus, shall be "carried by angels to Abraham's bosom." For yet a little while and those benevolent spirits who rejoiced over us on our conversion to God, shall perform an office towards us which will consummate our bliss. While mourning friends on earth shall bewail our separation from them, our friends in heaven will hail our arrival among them, and teach us the notes of praise which are used in the New Jerusalem. In the mean time, "it is meet, right, and our bounden duty, "at all times and in all places, to give thanks" unto our Triune God. Let us endeavour, therefore, "with angels and archangels, and all the "company of heaven, to laud and magnify his "glorious name." "Surely it will mightily "exalt our affections, and stir us up to the most "vigorous devotion, to consider with whom we "bear a part,—with angels, and archangels, and "all the company of heaven. For Jesus by his "death hath united heaven and earth, and "designed all his redeemed ones to sing *Halle-*"*lujah* with the blessed spirits above, for ever "and ever. Therefore it is fit that we should "begin to unite our voices with them, with whom "we hope to praise God to all eternity. Only "as we sing with them, let us sing like them, "and not spoil their blessed harmony by mingling "flat and discordant notes. O with what delight "and pleasure, sincerity and joy, do they sing

" their hymns, while they are ravished with the " prospect of the divine perfections! Could we " but see their felicity and hear their music, it " would transport us above ourselves, and make " us forget and despise all other pleasures to join " with them. It may be that we fear, that we " cannot sing in so high a note; yet if we do it " with like sincerity, our lower key may grace " the harmony and complete the concord. Be- " hold, those blessed spirits who had no need of " any Saviour, and who never did offend, do " praise God with incessant voices for his mercy " and love to us, and seem to invite us, saying, " O ye sons of men, ' Praise the Lord with us, " ' and let us magnify his name together.' How, " then, can we be silent? especially when our " glorified brethren, prophets and apostles, saints " and martyrs, do also bear a part in this ad- " mirable hymn. How justly do we style the " object of these praises *a glorious name*, since " all the world resounds its praise! To it Che- " rubin and Seraphin, angels and archangels, " continually do cry, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY; " and all the saints in heaven and earth do join " to set forth the glory thereof *."

* Dr. Comber on the Trisagium.

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST.

Almighty God, who calledst Luke the physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, to be an evangelist and physician of the soul; may it please thee, that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed, through the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE collect for St. Luke's day contains—an introductory recital of St. Luke's call to the ministry of the Gospel—and a prayer, founded thereon, imploring for ourselves the healing efficacy of the medicines which he prepared.

Our evangelist is mentioned by name no more than thrice in the New Testament; (Col. iv. 14; 1 Tim. iv. 11; Philemon 24.) In the former of these passages he is called by St. Paul "the "beloved Physician." The ancient fathers, however, in general, and particularly St. Ignatius in his epistle to the Ephesians, suppose that St. Luke is intended by St. Paul, when he speaks of the "brother whose praise is in the Gospel "throughout all the churches," (2 Cor. viii. 18,) a declaration which is incorporated in our collect for St. Luke's day.

The Scripture having afforded us no account of St. Luke's history previous to his conversion, nor of his conversion itself, we must be contented with the notices which tradition has furnished concerning him. It is supposed that he

was born at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, a city famous for its extraordinary advantages. The pleasantness of its situation, the fertility of its soil, the vast extent of its commerce, the acknowledged erudition of its professors, the civility and politeness of its inhabitants, are circumstances which are celebrated by the orators of antiquity. But this city is still more renowned in the Christian history, because there the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians. It was an university, furnished with schools of learning, and professors of arts and sciences: so that our evangelist, being born in the very lap of the Muses, must probably have enjoyed a liberal education, his natural talents meeting with the means of improvement. We are informed, that he studied not only at Antioch, but also in all the schools both of Greece and Egypt, whereby he became an accomplished scholar in all the branches of human literature. Being thus furnished with knowledge in all the preparatory institutions of philosophy, he more particularly applied himself to the study of physic, for which the Grecian academies were most famous. His supposed skill as a painter seems to be founded in a mistake.

He appears to have been a Jewish proselyte; and it is probable that he was converted by the ministry of St. Paul during his abode at Antioch, after which, from a physician of the body, he became a "physician of the soul," even as the fishermen of Galilee were made fishers of men. From the time of St. Paul's journey into Macedonia, St. Luke was his inseparable companion and fellow-labourer in the ministry of the Gospel, as appears by his use of the first person plural in recording the history of the Apostle from that

period. (See Acts xvi. 10.) He followed the Apostle in all his dangerous enterprises, was present at his several arraignments at Jerusalem, and accompanied him in his perilous voyage to Rome, where he assisted him in those ministerial offices of which the Apostle's confinement precluded his personal performance. This greatly endeared him to St. Paul, who owned him as his "fellow-labourer," called him "the beloved "physician," and "the brother whose praise "is in the Gospel throughout all the churches." It is probable that he did not leave the Apostle till the latter had finished his course and was crowned with martyrdom. The time and manner of St. Luke's death are wholly uncertain.

It is supposed that our evangelist wrote his Gospel during the time of his association with St. Paul, and that he derived great assistance from him in composing it. He has informed us (chap. i. 1–4) that he was not himself an eye-witness of the facts which he records, but that he received his narrative from those who were; from whence it is evident that he had other help besides what St. Paul could afford.

St. Luke's history, which is entitled "The "Acts of the Apostles," was doubtless written at Rome at the end of St. Paul's two years imprisonment there, with which he concludes his memoirs. That our evangelist was its author, appears from the ancient Complutensian manuscript copy to which the name of St. Luke is prefixed, from its dedication to Theophilus, from some peculiarities of the style which identify its penman with that of the Gospel, and from the testimony of all antiquity.

The labours of our evangelist in preaching the Gospel were doubtless very beneficial during

his life. But his evangelic compositions have reached to successive generations. His Gospel and his ecclesiastical history have been and will be instrumental in the edification of the church to the end of the world. His praise, therefore, in the Gospel, on account of the eminent services which he hath done for the cause of Christianity, will be acknowledged throughout all the churches of Christ, to the time of the consummation of all things.

The term "Evangelist," by which St. Luke is characterised in our collect, has both a more general and a more restricted sense. In its more general sense it signifies a preacher of the Gospel, one who proclaims to perishing sinners the "glad "tidings of great joy;" in which application of the term every herald of salvation is an evangelist. But, in its more restricted sense, it is confined to the four historians of the life of Christ. By his call to the office of an evangelist, in either of these senses, St. Luke became a physician of the soul. His former employment was of a most laudable and beneficial kind. But it is exceeded in dignity and usefulness by that to which he was afterwards advanced, as much as the soul exceeds the body in value. The responsibility, difficulty, and labour, attached to the profession of a corporeal physician, are confessedly great; but they bear no comparison with that responsibility, difficulty, and labour, which are attached to the office of a spiritual physician, a minister of the everlasting Gospel.

We proceed now to the prayer which our collect founds on the call of St. Luke to be "an "evangelist and physician of the soul." We beseech God, "that by the wholesome medi-"cines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the

" diseases of our souls may be healed, through " Jesus Christ our Lord."

In this prayer moral disease is supposed to be epidemic; for we are all taught to implore a cure. This supposition corresponds with the general confession which is made by all the members of our church, that " there is no health " in us."

The church of Christ on earth is a hospital or infirmary, into which diseased souls are admitted by baptism for the purpose of obtaining a cure of their spiritual maladies. Many who are thus admitted derive no benefit from the charitable institution, in consequence of their refusal to take the medicine which is prescribed, and to comply with the rules of the house. Many of these are in a comatose or delirious state, and, of consequence, are unconscious of the nature of the place wherein they reside, and of the end proposed by their admission; and not a few give evidence of the awful effects which moral disease has produced on their understandings, by eulogizing the pleasures of their mansion, not under the notion of an hospital, but as a permanent abode in which they wish to continue, while their fellow-sufferers rend the air with groans of anguish. Some, however, among the numerous patients, are sensible of their diseases, know the gracious design of their reception into the church of Christ, and pray that " all the diseases of " their souls may be healed" by " the whole- " some medicines" which are administered to them, and with this view submit thankfully to the rules which are given for their conduct.

There is an analogy between the diseases of the body and those of the soul. The various cures which our Lord wrought on the bodies of

men during his abode on earth, are specimens and representations of the more stupendous miracles which he performs for the salvation of men's souls. The blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame, the lepers, the paralytics, &c. whom he healed of their various infirmities, were, in their outward condition, what we all are spiritually; only it is to be observed, that our souls are afflicted not with a single disease only, but with all those calamities at once. Ours is a complicated case. There is not perhaps a bodily complaint that can be named, with which some disorder of our souls may not be found to correspond. Symptoms of lethargy, asthma, dropsy, &c. &c. are combined in every fallen soul.

The health of the body consists in the vigour of its several constituent parts for the performance of their proper functions. And the same definition may be given of spiritual health. When the faculties of the soul fully answer the end for which they were created, it may be pronounced to be in a state of convalescence. What then was the end for which the rational soul was created? Was it not for the enjoyment of God and the glorification of his name? Let us feel then our spiritual pulse. Let us scrutinize the tendency of our affections, whether God be their object or not, and whether they beat with regularity and vigour. Do we respire freely and without obstruction the breath of divine life, inhaling the gracious influence of the Holy Ghost, and exhaling gratitude, love, and praise, without difficulty or labour? Can we engage in spiritual exercises at all times without reluctance, and continue in them without lassitude? Is our appetite for the bread of eternal life uniformly keen? Do we with facility digest it,

and are we duly nourished by it? These and such like inquiries will determine the state of our souls, whether they be sickly or in health. And surely they will prove, that "there is no "health in us."

The dreadful nature of that spiritual disease, or rather of that complication of diseases, under which all mankind labour, is apparent from many considerations. It is not indeed felt by all, because in many cases it has produced stupefaction or delirium. But when, in the progress of the cure, sensibility is restored, the pain which is felt, and the bitter complaints which are uttered by the patients, (see Rom. vii. 24,) sufficiently shew its dreadful nature. The rapidity of its progress towards its crisis, (which is certain death, unless the specific remedy be administered to check its progress,) and the costly nature of that remedy, together with the manner in which it was prepared for use, testify the same.

The doctrine of the Gospel is compared in our collect to medicine. For as the latter, through the blessing of God, is the means of restoring health to the body under the pressure of disease, so does the former to the sin-sick soul. Hence, in the language of Scripture, those who undertake to administer spiritual advice and consolation, are called physicians, (Job xiii. 4; Jer. viii. 22,) and our Lord has exhibited himself under this character (Matt. ix. 12). The goodness of God in providing remedies for the relief or cure of our corporeal maladies in so great a variety of forms, in both the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, is very admirable. But the medicines provided for the soul demand higher wonder, love, and praise; as its diseases are more terrible

than those of the body, their consequences more fatal, and their cure more difficult.

The doctrine of the Gospel is compared to "medicines" in the plural number; because, though the medicine is but one, it is exhibited under a great variety of forms, and has infinite virtue, being applicable to all the innumerable and complex symptoms of every patient's case. It will soften a callous heart, and heal one that is broken. The fever of ambition, the dropsy of covetousness, the flatulency of pride, the gangrene of envy, the atrophy of unbelief—these, and all other mental disorders, are provided for in the dispensatory of the Gospel.

These medicines, provided at the cost of the great Physician, and freely dispensed without money and without price to all who feel their need of them, were compounded and prepared for our use by the "physician of the soul, St. "Luke," who was divinely called to this office, and inspired with ability to fulfil it. If it be asked, What is St. Luke's doctrine of which our collect speaks? the answer is easy:—There is a perfect correspondence in the mode of practice adopted among the inspired physicians of the soul. For "their doctrine is not theirs, but "his who sent them." The prescription of one who was consulted in a very dangerous case by a sick patient at Philippi, is the prescription of all the rest:—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, "and thou shalt be saved." The atoning blood of Christ is the panacea, the universal medicine. St. Luke therefore "determined," in unison with his brethren in the college of Apostles, "to "know nothing" among his patients "but Jesus "Christ, and him crucified." The doctrine of

salvation by grace is the only medicine of the soul; and it is a safe, efficacious, and infallible remedy.

In our present collect we pray "that by the "wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered "by St. Luke, all the diseases of our souls may "be healed." Important petition! But are we sincere in the use of it? Do our hearts concur with our lips? Are we earnestly desirous of a cure? Do we painfully feel our diseases, and long for relief from them? Do we not only long for pardon, but also for sanctification? Holiness is spiritual health; depravity is moral sickness. Do we wish not only to be freed from some of the more troublesome symptoms, but from them all—to be enabled to love the Lord our God with all our minds, souls, and strength, and to serve him with unceasing vigour, and in the constant employment of all our faculties? If these be indeed the prevailing desires of our souls, they will discover themselves by the use which we make of the remedy prescribed.

It appears to be a strange question, which our Lord addressed to the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, "Wilt thou be made whole?" John v. 6. Could the wretch, who had laboured under infirmity for thirty and eight years, hesitate a moment about the acceptance of relief? Certain, however, it is, that the same question, addressed to sinners with relation to spiritual infirmities, is not always answered in a decisively affirmative tone. Oh no! many are insensible of their malady, nay, are in love with it, and have no desire to be healed. The same question is proposed to us. It is a most gracious proposal; but it is also one of a most searching

and awful nature. Let the reader inquire, whether he be willing to be healed—not only to have his conscience healed by the blood of Christ, but also to have all his moral diseases healed by the grace of the divine Spirit. Are there no irregular emotions which we cherish, and which we should be loth to have suppressed?

Our collect teaches us that, though men may be employed in dispensing these medicines, God must apply them to the heart, and give them their efficacy for the production of a cure. Hence we are instructed to implore his interference, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Are we conscious of this? and, in the use of means, do we depend on a divine blessing?

The melancholy state of human nature is an inference from our collect which must strike the most cursory observer. What a sad catalogue do our bodily diseases constitute! But how much more numerous, distressing, obstinate, and dangerous, are our spiritual maladies! Yet, how often have we confessed our spiritual state without feeling it, and verbally implored help without desiring it! What a strange infatuation is this! How must angels, who know what health and vigour mean, pity our diseased and wretched state! and how must they wonder at our indifference to the remedy which is divinely provided!

How precious is the Gospel of Christ, when viewed as a remedy, the only and never-failing remedy, for the malady of sin! Were infallible means of cure for the plague discovered and advertised in Turkey, or for the consumption in England, how eagerly would the prescription

be tried! and how would the shop where the sovereign balsam was vended, be thronged! How would the name of the inventor be blessed! But how little is the Gospel heard or read! How thinly occupied are the pews of the church! How few surround the Lord's table! How rare the tribute of praise to the adorable name of Jesus!

ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE.

O Almighty God, who hast built thy church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone; grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple, acceptable to thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONCERNING the two Apostles who are united in the commemoration of this day, our information, both from the sacred history and ecclesiastical antiquity, is extremely defective. The former places their names in the catalogue of the Apostles, but details no particulars concerning them. And what the latter has related seems to be built on very precarious evidence. Perhaps this scantiness of information, together with a desire of lessening, as much as gratitude would permit, the number of holidays, gave occasion to the union of these excellent men in the thankful recollections of the church.

The former of these holy men was surnamed the Cananite—an appellation which has given rise to various conjectures; some critics supposing that it was derived from Cana of Galilee, where they conclude that he was born; while others, identifying it with Zelotes, (the title given him by St. Luke, with which it agrees in signification,) derive it from the supposed warmth of his temper, from his former zeal for the law,

or from his connexion with the sect of the Zealots, which is mentioned by Josephus in his history of the Jewish war. But no proof appears that this sect existed previously to that unhappy war.

What became of St. Simon after the day of Pentecost, is very uncertain; some writers having asserted that he preached in Africa, and others having assigned Europe for his province. The place and manner of his death are equally unknown.

St. Jude had two other names besides that of Jude or Judas, by which he is distinguished in the New Testament. He is called Thaddeus and Lebbeus. That these names belonged to the same person, appears from a comparison of the catalogues of the Apostles which the different evangelists have given. (See Luke vi. 14–16; Matt. x. 2–4; and Acts i. 13.) It has been supposed that these names were used for the purpose of distinguishing our Apostle from the traitor Judas; and it is remarkable that, while neither St. Matthew nor St. Mark ever calls him Jude, St. John, who so denominates him, takes particular care to prevent any confusion from the ambiguity of the name. (See John xiv. 22.)

That St. Jude was related to our blessed Lord, appears from the objection which his own unbelieving countrymen raised against his pretensions to divinity, saying, "Is not this the "carpenter's son? Is not his mother called "Mary, and his brethren, James, and Joses, "and Simon, and Judas?" Besides which, Jude styles himself "the brother of James," the Bishop of Jerusalem, in the superscription of

his Catholic epistle. It is probable that the four above-mentioned persons were the sons of Joseph, the husband of Mary, by a former wife.

The accounts given us of St. Jude's ministry after the day of Pentecost are scarcely more satisfactory than those given of St. Simon. It seems however to be agreed that Judea, Galilee, Idumea, Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia, were the principal scenes of his labours. By the Latin church he is said to have suffered martyrdom in Persia, in consequence of his successful opposition to the superstitious rites of the Magi.

Finding nothing more on which we can depend concerning our two Apostles St. Simon and St. Jude, we proceed to consider the collect which is appointed to be used on the day that is consecrated to their memory. The appearance of their names in the list of the twelve Apostles, by whose ministry the world was first evangelized, is sufficient to endear them to us.

Our collect consists of—a preface, gratefully reciting the mercy of God in erecting his "church on the foundation of the apostles and "prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head "corner-stone,"—and a prayer appropriate to "this introduction.

The preface is a verbal quotation from Eph. ii. 20, wherein the church of God is compared to a building. This emblem, which is strikingly instructive, is frequently used in the pages of divine revelation; the edifice referred to being sometimes a house, at others a city, and frequently a temple, or an edifice dedicated to divine worship. It is the latter of these, to which our collect and the text on which it is founded, allude; and the temple at Jerusalem is

the archetype to which our ideas are naturally led in contemplating this view of the Christian church.

In surveying an edifice, the inquiries which arise in the mind respect—its foundation,—its architect,—its materials,—its use,—and its style of building. The two latter of these inquiries will fall under consideration, when we come to the petitionary part of our collect. Its introduction leads us to consider the three former particulars.

The foundation on which the edifice of the Christian church is built, is that "of the apos-"tles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being "the chief corner-stone." When the apostles and prophets are spoken of as the foundation of the church, they are not to be considered personally; but it is the doctrine which they taught that is intended. When our Lord, addressing himself to Peter, said, "Thou art Peter," and added, alluding to the interpretation of his name, which signifies a rock, "on this rock "will I build my church," he must be supposed either to have pointed to himself, or rather to have referred to the doctrine which St. Peter, in common with the other apostles, would promulgate to the world, whereby sinners would be brought to believe in his name for pardon, holiness, and heaven. The apostles and prophets were not crucified for us, nor are we baptized in their names. But all our hopes of salvation are built on the doctrine of the cross, which they preached and have transmitted to us.

In the doctrine of the apostles and prophets there is the most perfect concord; all of either college having concurred in building their own hopes, and in leading others to build theirs, on

Jesus Christ, the "stone which God has laid in "Sion for a foundation—the tried stone, the "precious corner-stone, the sure foundation," "other than which can no man lay." Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 11. He, as God-man Mediator, as the atoning sacrifice, and the justifying fulfiller of the law, is the sole basis of a sinner's hope. On him the whole pressure of the building rests; on him its stability entirely depends; and by him are all its parts united. The primary existence of the church, and its subsequent safety, result from his mediation. Of him, as the Alpha and Omega, both the foundation and head stone, all the prophets spake with one mouth, as if they had possessed but one common organ of speech. (Luke i. 70; Acts iii. 18. 21.) And the apostles, as if their bodies had been animated by one soul, "determined to know "nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The fact is, that the same Spirit, who is the glorifier of Jesus, spake by them all.

Let the reader inquire whether he be built on "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, "Jesus Christ being the head corner-stone,"—or not. The question is momentous, and involves eternal consequences. The state of our hearts, and the conduct of our lives, will enable us to solve it; in doing which we shall derive assistance from the remaining part of our collect.

The architect of that spiritual building, which is raised on "the foundation of the apostles and "prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head "corner-stone," is God. He drew the stupendous plan, and he carries it into execution. He laid the foundation-stone, and he puts every living stone of which the building is composed, in its proper place, and fixes it there. The

builder and maker of the church is God. Pre-ordination, Redemption, Conversion, are all of God. And though instruments are used in the accomplishment of the divine purpose, the good that is done upon earth, God doth it himself*. The work of the prophets, and the apostles, and of their successors in the ministry, is merely instrumental. The agent of the work is God. Vast as are the benefits which we derive from the labours of the prophets and apostles, to God who raised them up, qualified them for their office, commissioned them to exercise it, and gave them all its success, is the undivided honour due.

The materials of which this "spiritual house" is composed, are called by St. Peter (1 Eph. ii. 5) "lively stones." Christ the foundation is the living stone, which hath life in himself; and all genuine Christians, by being built on him, derive life from him. He diffuses a principle of spiritual and eternal life throughout the whole edifice, and every stone of which it is constructed. His Spirit pervades every part of it. By his power the stones are hewed out of the quarry of corrupt nature, are squared and polished, set in the building, and cemented to the foundation and to each other. Are we conscious of these operations on our own souls? In making the inquiry let us remember, that it is the invisible church of God of which our collect speaks, a "spiritual house;" and that we may belong to the outward and visible community, without being incorporated in that temple

* "SALUTIS CATENA. DEUS ordinavit, VERBUM "promittit, CHRISTUS meruit," SPIRITUS retegit, "SACRA-"MENTA obsignant; FIDES recipit, OS fatetur, OPERA tes-"tantur."—*Woll. Comp. Theol. Christianæ.*

which is the habitation of God through the Spirit.

Having thus reviewed the introductory part of our collect, we proceed to consider the appropriate petition which is built thereon. "Grant "us to be so joined together in unity of spirit "by the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, "that we may be made an holy temple, acceptable "unto thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In the unity and symmetry of its parts consist the beauty and strength of every building. It is in vain that the foundation is laid on a rock, unless the superstructure be firmly united to that foundation, and its stones properly cemented to each other. The Apostle therefore says, in the verse which follows the introduction of our collect, "In Jesus Christ, the chief corner-stone, "all the building, fitly framed together, groweth "unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom," he adds, addressing himself to the Ephesians, "Ye also are builded together, for an habita-"tion of God, through the Spirit." Eph. ii. 20–22.

Now, when we pray that we may be "joined "together in unity of spirit" by the prophetic and apostolic doctrine, we implore a communication of grace that we may be united firmly to Christ by faith, and to one another in love. The first object of concern is, that we may be established on Christ as our foundation. To have clear views of the nature and necessity of his mediatorial work, and to have the heart built up in him, so as to be "filled with joy "and peace in believing," is the ardent desire of every true member of the Christian church, for himself and for all his fellow worshippers. That many among us are not united to Christ

by faith, is a subject of reasonable fear and of charitable jealousy to the genuine Christian. And that he himself needs more grace for his further establishment in the truth, is the result of full conviction. Whether, therefore, we regard ourselves or others, the propriety of this petition is manifest. Grace for the promotion of "the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," is the second object of our prayer. This is connected with our union to Christ, and the invariable result of faith in him; so that if any man fancy himself to be a member of the church, who is not endeavouring to maintain this temper of mind, he "deceives himself, and the truth is not "in him." He is not built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The prevalency of this disposition is essential to the welfare of the church, if not to its existence: for as the stones of a building mutually support and strengthen each other, so it is also in the church of Christ. The living stones are the means of mutual union to the sure foundation. (Eph. iv. 16.)

Whether the fervent use of this prayer be not peculiarly necessary in the present day, let those judge who have duly contemplated the present state of the Christian church. Let the heresies which distract her, the differences of opinion which prevail on the most important points, be considered. Let the spirit of schism which agitates and weakens her be also remembered. And surely it will appear necessary to pray that we may be "joined together in unity of spirit." If cracks and fissures in a building be marks of debility; how infirm is the state of Christianity among us! But blessed be God, though the external part of the edifice be thus endangered, there is still a people among us, who have "one

" Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and " Father of all, who is above all, and through " all, and in them all." There are a few who cleave to Christ in faith, and to one another in love. But even among these there is a need of more grace. For as a severe frost injures the mortar, by which the stones of material buildings are united; so the disorganizing spirit of the present day has weakened the union which ought to subsist among real Christians, between ministers and their people and the people themselves. Too little importance is attached by general opinion to unity and charity in the church of Christ. May God in his mercy look on the church of England, and unite her members more closely in sentiment, in affection, and in practice!

The last thing to be considered is the use to which this building is appropriated, the end for which it is designed. Judging from the choice of its foundation, the character of its architect, the costly nature of its materials, the labour expended on its construction, and the time which its erection has already occupied, we may infer that its use is very important, its object grand and magnificent. And this inference will prove to be just. For the building thus gradually erected, " groweth unto an holy temple in the " Lord." The fabric is reared for the purpose of becoming " an habitation of God through " the Spirit." " Thus saith the Lord, The " heaven is my throne, and the earth is my " foot-stool: where is the house, that ye build " unto me? and where is the place of my rest? " For all those things hath my hand made, and " all those things have been, saith the Lord: " but to this man will I look, even to him that is

" poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at " my word." Isa. lxvi. 1, 2; comp. Acts vii. 48, 49. True believers are " the temple of the " living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in " them and walk in them; and I will be their " God, and they shall be my people." 2 Cor. vi. 16.

Referring to this figurative view of the church's felicity, we pray " that we may be made a holy " temple, acceptable unto God through Jesus " Christ our Lord." We earnestly implore that, as the typical temple at Jerusalem was honoured with the Shekinah which abode in the holy of holies, so we may be indulged with the divine presence among us, now in our present state, in proportion to our capacity of receiving it, and more fully hereafter when that capacity shall be enlarged. We pray that, as sweet incense continually ascended from the golden altar in the material sanctuary; so the incense of praise may evermore ascend from the temple of our hearts: and that, as the temple and its various services were acceptable to God through the typical sacrifices which were therein offered; so we and our services may be also " acceptable to him, " through Jesus Christ our Lord."

O how transcendent is that honour to which believers are destined! How vast the felicity which is prepared for them, and of which they now enjoy the foretaste! Well may they exclaim with the ancient church, in relation to their God, " How great is his goodness! how great " is his beauty!" Whatever be our present attainments, let us acknowledge that we are utterly unworthy of the inestimable favour which is conferred on us, of being " an habitation of " God through the Spirit;" and let us labour to

acquire a greater meetness for this holy and happy relation to him. Let us stand firm on our foundation; let us cleave to one another; let us prize the instituted means of grace; let us, in all humility, thankfully keep our stations in the church, whatever they be; let us beware of schism; let us cultivate unity; and let us adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Soon will the top-stone be placed on the divinely erected edifice with shoutings, "Grace, "Grace unto it." The temple will be complete. God will be eternally honoured in it, while the living stones that compose it, shall continually ascribe glory, honour, and blessing to its divine Founder and Architect throughout eternity.

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

On this day we commemorate "the general "assembly and church of the first-born, whose "names are written in heaven;" we gratefully recal to mind, in one general recollection, "the "glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly "fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army "of Martyrs," and the members of "the holy "Church throughout all the world," who have "departed this life in the faith and fear of "God." The observance of this day does not perhaps claim so high an antiquity* as that of some other festivals. But it is so proper in itself, and so evidently conducive to edification, that the want of sanction from early antiquity is no material defect. If the glorification of God in his saints, the encouragement which is derivable from their example to ourselves, the promotion

* Mr. Wheatly places its first appointment about the year 610, p. 235. But Bingham (Ecclesiast. Antiq. b. xx. chap. vii. § 14) traces it up to St. Chrysostom's time, from whose homilies he cites a passage in which it is referred to.

of unity in the church, the increase of spiritual-mindedness, of deadness to the world, and of a heavenly conversation—if these things be objects of any importance, we may fully justify the celebration of this festival, for it is calculated to subserve them all. The Scriptures have introduced the saints who have preceded us to our notice for these important purposes. And surely we concur with the intention of Scripture, while we recite in our public assemblies those passages of the sacred pages which relate to this subject, and mingle prayer with them.

Our collect for All Saints' Day contains—an introduction by which God is glorified in his saints;—and a prayer for grace, that we may be enabled to imitate them, "who through faith "and patience inherit the promises."

Those, of whom our collect is a memorial, are therein styled God's "elect." The term is scriptural, and means *chosen*. It is used among other passages in Rom. viii. 33; Col. iii. 12; Tit. i. 1; 1 Pet. i. 2; 2 John 13. In defining this important term, which, in consequence of human pride and ignorance, has given rise to so much controversy in the church, it will be safest verbally to adopt the language of the Scriptures and of our Church. And these collateral testimonies are indeed so full and explicit, that it is needless to add any explanation of their meaning. St. Paul, addressing himself to the Ephesians (chap. i. 3–6), in a strain of grateful thanksgiving on their behalf, expresses himself thus:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our "Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in "Christ: according as he hath chosen us in "him before the foundation of the world, that

" we should be holy and without blame before " him in love: Having predestinated us to the " adoption of children by Jesus Christ to him- " self, according to the good pleasure of his " will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, " wherein he hath made us accepted in the " Beloved." St. Peter (1 Epist. i. 2) calls those to whom he wrote, " Elect according to the " fore-knowledge of God the Father, through " sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, " and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." On these scriptural views of this awful subject our church thus comments in her twenty-seventh article the title of which is " Of Predestination " and Election :"—" [1] Predestination to life is the " everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before " the foundations of the world were laid) he hath " constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, " to deliver [2] from curse and damnation [3] those " whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, " and to bring them by Christ to everlasting " salvation, as vessels made to honour. [4] Where- " fore they, which be endued with so excellent a " benefit of God, be called according to God's " purpose by his Spirit working in due season: " they through grace obey the calling: [5] they be " justified freely: [6] they be made sons of God by " adoption: [7] they be made like the image of his " only begotten Son Jesus Christ: [8] they walk " religiously in good works, and [9] at length by " God's mercy they attain to everlasting felicity. " —As the godly consideration of predestination " and our election in Christ is full of sweet, " pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly " persons, and such as feel in themselves the " working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the " works of the flesh and their earthly members,

" and drawing up their minds to high and " heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly " establish and confirm their faith of eternal " salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as " because it doth fervently kindle their love " towards God; so, for curious and carnal per- " sons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have " continually before their eyes the sentence of " God's predestination, is a most dangerous " downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them " either into desperation, or into wretchlessness* " of most unclean living, no less perilous than " desperation.—[10] Furthermore we must receive " God's promises in such wise as they be gene- " rally set forth in holy Scripture. And [11] in " our doings, that will of God is to be followed, " which we have expressly declared unto us in " the word of God."

The " elect" are said to be " knit together in " one communion and fellowship in the mystical " body of Christ." This declaration probably refers to what St. Paul says, (Eph. iv. 15, 16,) " Christ is the head, from whom the whole body, " fitly joined together and compacted by that " which every joint supplieth, according to the " effectual working in the measure of every part, " maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying " of itself in love." (See also Col. ii. 19.) As many members in the animal system make but one natural body; so also the members of the church, which constitute " the mystical body of

[1] Eph. i. 4, 5; Matt. xxv. 34; 2 Tim. i. 9. [2] Gal. iii. 13. [3] 1 Pet. i. 2. [4] Rom. viii. 30. [5] Eph. i. 7. [6] Gal. iv. 5. [7] Rom. viii. 29. [8] Eph. ii. 10. [9] Eph. i. 11; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. [10] John iii. 16; 1 Tim. ii. 4. 6. [11] Luke x. 25–28.

* In the Latin copy, *securitatem*; wretchlessness, for recklessness, or carelessness.

" Christ," are " knit together in one communion " and fellowship." — Two things require our attention.

First, that all saints are united to Christ, as the members of the body are to their head. From him all life, sense, and motion are derived by the arteries, veins, and nerves of " the mystical body." From him proceeds " the Spirit of life," through those channels of communication which he has appointed; even as the nervous fluid flows from the head in the natural body to all its constituent parts. Whatever a saint is, as such, that he is by virtue of union with Christ. The slightest puncture, though made with the finest needle, in the spinal marrow, which is the channel of the nervous fluid, or any extrinsic pressure which stops its course, brings on a general paralysis of those parts which are below the wound or stricture; and if the injury sustained be above the organs which are essential to vitality, immediate death ensues. And the cause is evident; for the communication between the head and the body is thereby destroyed. Now, in like manner, a separation from Christ, a cessation of communication with him by faith, if it be partial, partially palsies the soul; and were a total disunion in any instance to take place, a total extinction of spiritual life would unavoidably and directly follow. For " if any man have not the Spirit of " Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in " you, the body is dead because of sin, but the " spirit is life because of righteousness." Rom. viii. 9, 10.

Hence we learn the indispensable necessity of being united to Christ by faith, and of adhering to him. The formation of this union is the first

object of concern to all who would be saved; and the preservation of communion with him the grand business of the life of faith. Until we are incorporated into Christ, there can be no life in us; but we remain dead in trespasses and sins. And in proportion to the degree in which the believer's intercourse with him is maintained, will comfort, vigour, and holy activity be felt and manifested.

Hereby also we discern the reason why Satan, both by his internal suggestions, and by the doctrines of his emissaries, labours to assail our faith in Christ, in the glory of his person, the perfection of his mediatorial work, and the efficacy of his grace. Error respecting these cardinal points strikes directly at the life of the soul, by tending to diminish, interrupt, or destroy our communion with the head.

We proceed, secondly, to consider the elect as "knit together in one communion and fellow-"ship" with each other, being members of the same "mystical body" of Christ. All the parts of the human body are not only connected with the head, but also one with another. There is a continuity and dependency subsisting throughout the whole animal frame. Now "as we have "many members in one" natural body, and all members have "not the same office: so we," who constitute the invisible church, "being "many, are one body in Christ, and every one "members one of another." Rom. xii. 4, 5. "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one "body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether "we be bond or free; and have been all made "to drink into one Spirit," &c. &c. 1 Cor. xii. 13. We profess, in the creed, to believe in "the

"communion of saints;" and this communion our collect ascribes to God as its gracious author, and to Christ as its meritorious cause.

Who then are saints, the persons who are thus knit together? The terms "elect," and Christ's "mystical body," do not comprehend all the members of the visible church; but those only who are spiritually united to him as their head of influence and governance; who are called with a holy calling, endued with a holy faith, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and lead a holy life. These only are saints; and these persons are to be found partly on earth, and partly in heaven; both divisions forming but one body, which includes all the faithful from Adam to the end of the world.

Between whom, it may be asked, doth this communion or fellowship subsist? What is its nature? And what are the benefits which its participants derive from it?

1. All saints have communion and fellowship with God the Father, who is "THE HOLY "ONE." "Truly," saith St. John, (1 Epist. i. 3,) "Our fellowship is with the Father." Abraham, the father of the faithful, was "called the friend "of God;" and all his children partake of the benefit. This communion consists in, and is maintained by, a communication of loving-kindness and its tokens on the part of our Father which is in heaven; and of gratitude and love, of trust and obedience, on the part of his children. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath "bestowed on us, that we should be called "the sons of God," 1 John iii. 1; and be made "partakers of the divine nature!" 2 Pet. i. 4. Well may "we love him," who hath thus "first "loved us." "Because we are sons, God hath

" sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts; " whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

2. This communion subsists between all the saints and Christ their head, as we have already proved. " Our fellowship is with the Father and " the Son." 1 John i. 3. " He that abideth " in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the " Father and the Son." 2 John, 9. This is the effect of our Saviour's intercession, that all who should believe on him through the word of his Apostles, might " be one, as the Father is in " him, and he in the Father." John xvii. 20. 23. For the purpose of forming this union, he assumed our nature, our infirmities, and our curse; and he communicates to us his merit, righteousness, and Spirit. " Of his fulness we " all receive, and grace for grace." We have fellowship with him in his birth, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension. (Phil. iii. 10; Eph. ii. 6; 1 Peter i. 8.)

3. This communion subsists between all the saints and the Holy Ghost. For we read of " the " fellowship of the Spirit," and of " the commu- " nion of the Holy Ghost." Phil. ii. 1; 2 Cor. xiii. 14. He dwells in them as a Sanctifier, Comforter, and Spirit of adoption; and they yield themselves up to his guidance and governance. (1 Cor. iii. 16.)

4. There is, moreover, fellowship between all the saints and the holy angels, by an instrumental communication of benefits on their parts, and a thankful reception of them on ours. They " minister to the heirs of salvation." They " rejoice over every sinner that repenteth," and joyfully convey the departed spirits of the saints to Abraham's bosom. We serve the same God; are possessed, in a lower degree, of the same

holy sensibilities; and shall be eternally united with them in the same place, employments, and felicities.

5. The saints on earth have communion with each other. (1 John i. 7.) They participate in the same ordinances; rely on the same promises, are travelling in the same road; have the same trials and conflicts; are engrafted on the same stock, and derive vitality from the same root. Hence they are united in love. They mutually receive and communicate blessing. There is a continuity of parts, and a reciprocation of benefits throughout the "mystical body of Christ."

6. There is communion subsisting between saints on earth and saints in heaven. For the former are "come unto mount Sion, and unto "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeru- "salem, and to an innumerable company of "angels, to the general assembly and church of "the first-born which are written in heaven, and "to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of "just men made perfect." Heb. xii. 22, 23. Death makes no breach in "spiritual commu- "nion." Saints on earth are united to the same head with "saints made perfect," derive from the same source, and tend to the same central point, "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." We communicate with the glorified spirits of our brethren in their happiness, and thank God on their behalf. They, it may be supposed, sympathise with us in our remaining difficulties and sufferings, and mutually with us look forward to a completion of the "mystical body of Christ," when the number of the elect shall be accomplished*.

* See Bishop Pearson on the Creed, art. ix. where the reader will find the doctrine of "the communion of saints" amply and most satisfactorily discussed.

Let us pause, before we proceed, for the purpose of inquiring whether we have any knowledge of this "communion and fellowship," in which "God's elect are knit together in the mystical "body of his Son Christ our Lord." Is it not to be feared that many who belong to the visible church are wholly unacquainted with this peculiarity of the saints? O let us scrutinize our bosoms on the subject, remembering that without communion with the head and members we cannot participate with "the mystical body of "Christ" in "those unspeakable joys which are "prepared" exclusively "for them who unfeign-"edly love God."

We proceed to consider the prayer of our collect; in which we implore grace, that we may imitate the saints now, and be united with them hereafter.

First, we implore grace, that we may be enabled "to follow God's blessed saints in all "virtuous and godly living." For, unless we are now made like unto them, we cannot lawfully hope to partake of their felicity: since it is declared in the word of God that "without "holiness no man shall see the Lord." The term *saint* is often used by a profane world as a term of reproach; but none, saints excepted, can enter heaven.

We have already observed that, although the mystical body of Christ consists of none but those who are really holy; yet there are many unsanctified persons within the pale of the visible church. Multitudes who join in our public worship are unrenewed in the spirit of their minds, and are strangers to the communion of saints. With a relation to these, therefore, the propriety of our prayer is at once apparent.

But it is needful also to be offered on behalf of

those who are already saints. For they are sanctified only in part. They have not "already "attained, neither are already perfect." They have not fully "apprehended that, for which "they have been apprehended of Christ Jesus." Their understandings still want further measures of illumination; and their hearts, of conversion. "The flesh" yet "lusteth against the Spirit;" they are still in a world of temptation; still liable to fall. They are conscious of danger and defect.

To "follow the blessed saints" is to tread in their steps; to feel as they felt, and to act as they acted, while they were in the world. It is to imitate their faith, hope, patience, and charity: like them, to let "our light shine before men;" and, like them, to persevere unto the end, till we "receive the crown of glory which fadeth not "away."

Our collect pronounces the saints to be "blessed." They are blessed even in the present life, notwithstanding their numerous personal wants, miseries, and complaints. For they are justified freely by divine grace; they are partially sanctified; they are "blessed with all "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ "Jesus;" they have "an inheritance laid up for "them which is incorruptible, undefiled, and "fadeth not away." But those who have departed this life, to whom "an entrance has been "ministered abundantly into the everlasting "kingdom of their Lord and Saviour Jesus "Christ," are still more blessed. For they enjoy the harvest of that blessedness, of which we only taste the first fruits. To them, therefore, the epithet is applicable with a full emphasis of propriety. "Blessed are the dead," said the voice which was heard from heaven, "which die

"in the Lord; from henceforth: yea, saith the "Spirit; for they rest from their labours, and "their works do follow them." They have "come out of great tribulation, and have washed "their robes, and made them white in the blood "of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the "throne of God, and serve him day and night "in his temple: and he that sitteth on the "throne dwells among them. They hunger no "more, neither thirst any more; neither doth "the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the "Lamb which is in the midst of the throne feeds "them, and leads them unto living fountains of "waters: and God hath wiped away all tears "from their eyes." Rev. xiv. 13; vii. 14–17. Oh, happy state! O Lord, grant us so to "follow "thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly "living," that we may be blessed with them.

That we need more grace in order that we may be enabled to follow them more fully, and persevere in an imitation of their example unto the end, will be acknowledged by all saints here on earth. If any man be a stranger to a consciousness of this necessity, and unsolicitous to have it relieved, he can have no evidence that he is numbered among the saints. The character of the patriarchs, of the prophets, of the apostles, and of the martyrs, is the scope of our desires and endeavours. But we fall very short of a full resemblance. "Less than the least of all saints" is the estimate which every truly humble disciple forms of himself. But as they were men of like passions with ourselves, and had the same difficulties and temptations to surmount which oppose our progress—since by the grace of God they were what they were, and that grace is as rich and free as ever it was,—we need not despair.

We tread in their steps though our progress is slower, and the goal yet at a great distance; and feeling our own inability to follow them by our own strength, we look to that almighty arm, which made them more than conquerors, for like aid and support.

The "blessed saints" are exhibited, in our collects, as examples of all "virtuous and godly "living." Virtue is moral goodness, and godliness is an universal regard to God. These differ from each other, so that the language of our collect is not tautologous. Saints possess the former in common with some heathens*. The latter is peculiar to themselves. Both are essential to the Christian character; but the latter is its distinguishing feature.

Are we endeavouring thus to follow the blessed saints? Are we painfully conscious of our own imperfections? Are we solicitous for a larger measure of grace, that our imitation of them may be more exact? If no such dispositions are felt within our bosoms, how hypocritical is our prayer!

The end which we propose to ourselves by an imitation of the saints, is a participation with them of "those unspeakable joys which are pre-"pared for them that unfeignedly love God, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." O glorious object, worthy of our ambition, worthy of our utmost efforts! May the prospect fire our souls, add fervency to our prayers and energy to our endeavours!

Holiness is not the meritorious cause of heavenly felicity, which is attainable only "through

* See the Collect for the Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity.

"Jesus Christ our Lord," his obedience unto death being exclusively its procuring cause. But sanctification is the only path that leads to glorification; and an indispensable pre-requisite and qualification for it. Thereby departed saints were prepared for those unspeakable joys which they now inherit, and thereby only can we partake with them. And it may moreover be observed, that the degree of holiness which is attained by the saints on earth will determine the measure of happiness which they will be capable of receiving in heaven.

That the joys of heaven are unspeakably great, yea, that they transcend the utmost reach of human imagination, the Scriptures testify. For they assure us that "eye hath not seen, "nor ear heard, neither have entered into the "heart of man, the things which God hath pre-"pared for them that love him." The images of Scripture afford us some faint corruscations of light on the subject; and occasional moments of sweet experience disclose the nature of those pleasures which are at God's right hand. But these gleams of radiance are like the effects of a vivid flash from the summer's cloud in a dark night, whereby an imperfect and transient glimpse of surrounding objects is obtained, while no distinct apprehensions can be formed concerning them. The fulness of heavenly joy is only known to them who possess it.

These "unspeakable joys are prepared for "all those who unfeignedly love God," and for none besides them. And the reason of this is evident; for none but those who unfeignedly love God, are capable of participating in them; since the essence of heavenly felicity will consist in a continual influx of divine love to the soul,

and in suitable emotions of gratitude and affection towards its source. Do we suppose that we love him? Let us examine whether our love be "unfeigned." A mistake will be fatal to our happiness. How did the blessed saints evidence the sincerity of their love to God? Do we demonstrate the reality of ours by proofs of the same kind, though unequal to theirs in the degree of strength? A feigned love will avail nothing. It must be genuine, and produce the proper evidences of its reality.

O let us contemplate the "great multitude "which no man can number, of all nations, "and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, "clothed with white robes, and palms in their "hands!" let us listen to their song, while they cry "with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our "God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto "the Lamb." The glorious sight and the melodious sounds will animate our souls to "press "forward towards the mark for the prize of the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

CONCLUSION.

THE question proposed by our Lord to his disciples, with reference to the parables which he had delivered to them, may with propriety be addressed to the readers of the preceding pages: —"Have ye understood all these things?" Matt. xiii. 51. He was anxious that the important truths involved in all his mysterious discourses, might be clearly comprehended, and produce their due effect on the understanding, heart, and life. Gracious solicitude! worthy of the sinner's Friend, the compassionate Jesus! The author of these Essays, while he is conscious of multiplied imperfections in the execution of his plan, and of wide aberrations from the spirit of his adorable Master, hopes that his main object has been the promotion of the divine glory, and the communication of spiritual profit to his readers, and that neither a desire of human applause nor of worldly profit has been predominant in his breast. He feels solicitous that eternal advantage should accrue to his readers from what he has written; and therefore takes the liberty, before he concludes, of proposing our Lord's important question, "Have ye understood "all these things?"

The range which we have been led to take, in the course of the preceding Essays on the

Collects of our Church, has been wide and extensive. It has conducted us through all the more important parts of the Christian system both of faith and practice. What we are required to believe, and what we are required to do, with a view to our salvation, has been set before us. It may not be unprofitable to epitomize the whole in a concluding Essay. And, in order to render this review profitable, we shall adopt the mode of address which theological instructors have called the way of perpetual application. The reader is therefore requested to scrutinize his conscience on the following particulars.

Have ye understood the doctrines which our collects teach—the dispositions which they suppose to prevail, and which they are calculated to cherish, in all the professed members of our church—the desires which they breathe, as expressive of the wants and feelings of the faithful bosom—and the duties which they enforce on all who adopt the use of our liturgy?

1. Let the reader inquire, whether he have understood the doctrines which our collects teach. It is not indeed the primary design of our collects, nor of any other part of our liturgy, doctrinally to instruct the mind. Their chief object is the furtherance of devotion. But as ignorance cannot be its parent, the prefaces or introductory parts of the collects usually consist of some revealed truth, expressed in an eucharistic form of address to God; and even the petitionary part, directly or indirectly, necessarily conveys doctrinal information, as we have endeavoured to shew in the preceding Essays.

To reconduct the reader through the whole circle of Christian doctrines, as they are expressed or implied, more generally or particu-

larly inculcated in our collects, would require a repetition of almost all that has been before said. For brevity's sake the reader's attention is directed to three cardinal points:—The fall of man with its awful consequences;—the redemption by Christ with its blessed effects;—the communication of the Spirit with its renewing efficacy on the heart.

The fall of man with its awful consequences is taught expressly or implied in every collect; for every petition is founded on this supposition, and specifies some want as its natural result. More particularly we are instructed in this doctrine by being taught to confess our guilt, pollution, helplessness, and misery. A reference to verbal expressions is needless, as they must be fresh in the recollection of every person who has read the preceding pages with any degree of attention. We shall therefore only resume the question concerning these points, "Have ye "understood" them? Have you been made to feel your natural guilt, pollution, helplessness, and misery?

Redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ, with its blessed effects to believing souls, is also taught in every collect. The coming of Christ, his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, are commemorated; his person and character are described; and the method of salvation by him is plainly set forth. Now, have ye understood the all-important doctrine of justification by faith in his name? Have ye learned to put no trust in yourselves, and to confide only in the blood and righteousness of the incarnate God? You have avowed that you do trust exclusively in him. But oh! "Beware of the "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

The communication of the Holy Ghost for the renewal of the fallen soul in holiness, is the third cardinal point of doctrine plainly taught in our collects. It is implied in all our prayers, and in some of them unequivocally expressed. Have ye understood this? Are ye conscious that man is naturally "dead in trespasses and "sins," that he is corrupt, and destitute of every good thought and desire? That all good is from the operation of the Holy Ghost? That he begins, carries on, and perfects the work of conversion and sanctification? Do ye feel the necessity of his grace, and cordially implore it?

2. We proceed to consider the dispositions which our collects suppose to exist, and are calculated to cherish, in the members of our church. The language which is prepared for our use evidently supposes certain pious tempers to prevail in our bosoms; and these it is designed to promote while we join in our church-service. These are three-fold, corresponding with the foregoing doctrinal points.

A humble disposition is evidently supposed and cherished in the use of our collects. But what is humility? It is a judgment formed of ourselves according to truth. When we contemplate ourselves as guilty, vile, helpless, and undone, then we are humble. All this we are taught to confess as a fact. But have we understood our confessions so as to feel the truth of what we have avowed, and to be self-abased before God?

A believing disposition, accompanied with habitual self-renunciation and habitual recumbence on Christ, is further supposed and cherished by our forms of prayer. We have had abundant opportunities of shewing, that this temper of

mind is supposed in all those who use our collects, which are totally inconsistent with self-righteousness in all its shades. But are the sensibilities of the reader's heart consentaneous with this disposition? Doth he renounce self, and trust exclusively in Jesus?

A holy disposition of heart, consisting in a hatred of sin, sorrow on account of remaining corruption, and an earnest desire of deliverance from it, is likewise supposed to prevail in the members of our church. It is unnecessary to specify the proofs which arise from our collects on this head. For almost every collect is, directly or indirectly, a prayer for sanctifying grace. Will the temper of our minds justify our use of these requests?

3. We proceed to consider the desires which our collects breathe. And in this branch of our review we specify the direct object of these short prayers. They are expressions of desire, the feelings of a devout heart clothed in words. We mock God by reciting them, unless we feel the confessions, adorations, and supplications, which we profess to address to the Searcher of hearts. As brevity and comprehension are the objects of this recital, we shall reduce the blessings which we implore to three particulars,—pardon, holiness, and heaven.

We pray for the pardon of our sins, as a benefit procured for us by the death of Christ, and the acceptance of our persons, as the result of his obedience to the divine law. But do corresponding desires prevail in our bosoms? Do we feel the necessity of being pardoned, understand the nature of the blessing, and live in habitual dependence on divine mercy for obtaining it?

We moreover pray for holiness. For if pardon be essential to salvation, as it removes guilt from the soul and restores it to the divine favour, holiness is no less necessary as a qualification for the enjoyment of the divine favour and presence. Under this head we implore the influence of God's holy Spirit to illuminate, direct, and comfort our hearts, to convert us from the love and power of sin, to rescue us from temptation, to alienate our affections from the world, to conform us to the image of Christ, and to implant in us all those tempers in which holiness consists. Are these petitions expressive of our desires? Have we, whilst we have considered the subject, observed in ourselves an uniformity between our sensibilities and our words?

We further pray for a participation of heavenly happiness, and for all that is needful to prepare and qualify us for its enjoyment. But do we anticipate this happiness, and cultivate in ourselves a meetness for it? Many wish to escape from hell, who do not, after a close attention to the true nature of heavenly happiness, feel in themselves any cordial desire of participating in it.

4. There are duties, which our collects enforce on all those who use them. A system of duty, indeed, is no more the object of our collects, than a system of doctrine. Yet while Christian doctrines are stated, while Christian dispositions are supposed and cherished, while Christian desires are expressed, Christian duties are of course implied and enforced.

The term *love* comprehends both our duty towards God and our duty towards our neighbour; for "love is the fulfilling of the law."

It includes all morality and all godliness. Now, do we see that our prayers are absurd, hypocritical, and offensive to God, unless we practise, or at least earnestly desire and strive to practise, those duties with a view to the performance of which we implore his grace? "Why call ye me, "Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" is the tender and striking expostulation of our divine Master. We profess in our collects to be imitators of Christ, and followers of his saints. Is such indeed our true character?

But we descend to a still more particular application of the subject. The course of our Essays on the collects has conducted us through the period of twelve months, and brought us again to Advent Sunday, at which our efforts commenced. The returning season of the year concurs with our present design, and loudly calls us to the important duty of self-examination, respecting our state, character, and spiritual improvement.

1. The rapid lapse of time is a proper subject for serious reflection. How large a part of our short life is a single year! How many of our brethren have dropped into eternity, while we have been engaged in our present train of meditation! How soon must we follow them into that awful scene! Oh, let the reader, before he quits the subject, allow a moment for serious reflection! Let him ask himself, Am I a converted person, a believer, a saint, and thus prepared to meet my God?

2. The approaching day of judgment, of which this season is designed to remind us, is enough to rouse us from our torpid state of deep sleep, or slumber. The most awake are but half awake to their everlasting interests. BEHOLD,

HE COMETH!! The Judge,—the Judge—is at the door!—The account which we must give, and the doom which we must receive, are serious and solemn things, and demand fervent importunity in our applications for pardoning and sanctifying grace.

3. Eternity is before us. We are just entering on the boundless expanse. Happiness or misery without end must be the portion of every individual member of our church, according as he has been sincere or insincere in his profession. The sentence which will be pronounced on us will be irrevocable. What will a nominal relation to the church avail those who have been dissenters from the doctrines which she teaches, the dispositions which she requires, the desires which she expresses, and the duties which she enjoins? Man may deceive man, but God will not be mocked!

ALMIGHTY GOD, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life (in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility); that, in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

FINIS.

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